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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

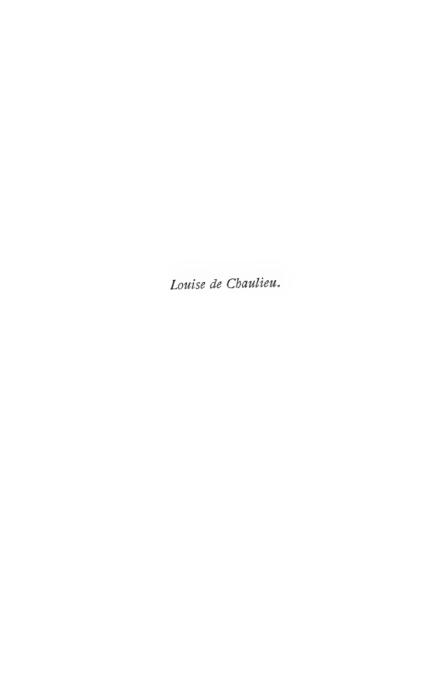
By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

MEMOIRS OF
TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN



Sapvinekt 1866 by Roberto Bros



THE WORKS

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOLUME III

TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN

A START IN LIFE. VENDETTA

STUDY OF A WOMAN

THE MESSAGE

Kllustrated

By JULES GIRARDET AND GEORGE ROUX

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
BOSTON



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TO GEORGE SAND.

This dedication, dear George, can add nothing to the glory of your name, which will cast its magic lustre on my book; but in making it there is neither modesty nor self-interest on my part. I desire to bear testimony to the true friendship between us: which continues unchanged in spite of travels and absence. - in spite, too, of our mutual hard work and the maliciousness of the world. This feeling will doubtless never change. The procession of friendly names which accompany my books mingle pleasure with the pain and toil their great number causes me; for they are not written without pain and difficulty, to say nothing of the reproach now cast upon me for what is called my alarming fecundity, - as if the world which poses before me were not more fecund still! Would it not be a fine thing, George, if some antiquary of long past literatures should find in that procession none but noble names, true hearts, pure and sacred friendships. - the glories of this century? Ought I not to show myself prouder of that great and certain happiness than of other successes which are not indisputable? To one who knows you well it must ever be a great happiness to be allowed to call himself, as I do here,

Your friend, .

DE BALZAC.

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MEMOIRS

OF

TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN.

FIRST PART.

Τ.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE.

Paris, September.

My DEAR DARLING, —I am out of school, too! and as you did not write me at Blois, it is for me to begin our charming correspondence. But there is nothing in this letter to make your beautiful black eyes sparkle; keep your exclamations for the one in which I shall confide to you my first love. People always talk of a first love; can there be a second? "Hush!" I hear you say; "instead of that, tell me how it is you have left the convent, where, when we parted, you expected to profess."

My dear, though the miracle of my deliverance did happen at the Carmelites, it was really the most natural thing in the world. The qualms of a frightened conscience carried the day over the commands of inflexible family policy, that 's all. My aunt, who did not wish to see me die of consumption, conquered my mother, who had so long prescribed the novitiate as the only cure for that malady. The black melancholy which took possession of me after you left the convent hastened this happy escape.

So, here I am in Paris, my angel; and I owe to you the happiness of being here. My Renée, if you could but have seen me the first day I had to live without you, you would certainly feel proud to have inspired such deep sentiments in your friend's heart. We have so long dreamed together, we have spread our wings and imagined life so often, that our souls seem welded together, like those of the Hungarian sisters; you remember that story told us by Monsieur Beauvisage?—who certainly was not the man of his name! Was ever a convent doctor better chosen?

Have you been ill, my treasure, in order to keep your dear one company? In the dark depression our parting caused me I recognized, more than ever, the ties that unite us. I thought them severed by separation; I was seized with disgust for life, like some poor, lonely turtle-dove; I felt how sweet it would be to die, and I was dying, softly. To be alone in the Carmelite convent, a prey to the dread of having to profess with-

out tasting life like Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and without my Renée! oh, it was illness, morfal illness! That monotonous life - every hour bringing a duty, a prayer, a toil, all so precisely alike that one knows at any moment exactly what a Carmelite sister is doing the world over - that horrible life in which one grows indifferent as to whether the things about us are or are not, had become for you and me a varied world; our minds had no trammels, fancy bestowed upon us the key of her kingdoms. We were charming hippogriffs, mounting each other in turn, the lively one waking up the sleepy one, till our spirits frolicked together in the unknown, forbidden world. Even that dreary book, the "Lives of the Saints" helped us to understand many hidden things. But the day your dear company was torn away from me I became a Carmelite indeed, - that is, a modern Danaïde, who, instead of trying to fill a vessel full of holes, draws every day from some deep well an empty bucket, hoping to find it full. My aunt was totally ignorant of our inward life. She could not understand my disgust for existence; she believed the two acres of her convent ground a celestial paradise. The life of a nun, my darling, cannot be accepted at our age by any girl unless she has more simplicity of nature than belongs to you or me, or else that ardor of devotion which makes my aunt so sublime a creature. My aunt sacrificed herself to a beloved brother; but

how can any one sacrifice herself to unknown beings and ideas?

For the last two weeks I have buried so many wild meditations and speeches in my heart, I have had so many thoughts and experiences to tell that could only be told to you, that I truly think I should choke to death were it not for these written confidences which are now to take the place of our precious talks. Ah! how necessary the life of the heart is to us! I begin my journal this morning, imagining that yours is beginning for me at the same time, and that I shall before long live in your beautiful valley of Gémenos, of which I know nothing except what you have told me, just as you are going to live in Paris, of which you know nothing except what we have dreamed together and what I am going to tell you.

So, my dearest, on a beautiful morning marked with a rose-colored letter in my book of life, there arrived from Paris my mother's dame de compagnie and Philippe, my grandmother's footman, sent to take me home. When my aunt summoned me to her room, and told me this news I was speechless with joy; I looked at her stupidly.

"My child," she said, in her guttural tones, "you leave me without regret, I see that; but this is not a final farewell; we shall see you here again. God has marked your brow with the sign of his elect; you have

the pride that leads to heaven or hell, but you have also too much nobility of soul to fall to hell. I know you better than you know yourself. Passion will never be in you what it is in ordinary women."

She drew me gently to her, and kissed me on the forehead with that fire which consumes her, which blackens the azure of her eyes, droops her eyelids, furrows her ivory forehead, and discolors her lovely face. She made my flesh creep. Before replying, I kissed her hands.

"Dear aunt," I said, "if your adorable kindness has not made your Paraclete healthy to my body or sweet to my soul, I shall have to weep so many tears to force me back that I feel sure you will neither hope nor pray for my return. I shall never return, unless betrayed by my king—if I meet with one; and if I do, death alone can tear him from me; I fear no Montespan."

"Silly girl," she said smiling, "don't leave those ideas behind you; carry them away with you; and let me tell you that you are much more of a Montespan than a La Vallière."

I kissed her. The poor woman could not keep from following me to the carriage, where her eyes were as much fixed on the family armorial bearings as on me.

Night overtook me at Beaugency, still plunged in a sort of moral torpor brought on by this singular farewell. What was I really about to find in this world so much desired?

In the first place, no one was at home to receive me; all my heart preparations were wasted. My mother was driving in the Bois de Boulogne; my father was attending a council of ministers; my brother, the Duc de Rhétoré, never came home, they told me, till it was time to dress for dinner. Mademoiselle Griffith (good name, she certainly has claws) and Philippe conducted me to my apartment.

This apartment is the one that used to belong to my grandmother, the Princesse de Vaurémont, who left me a fortune as to which nobody has ever said a word to me. You will understand the sadness that overcame me on entering these rooms so full of my childish memories of that dear creature. The apartment is just as she left it; I was to sleep in the bed she died on. Sitting on the edge of her sofa, I wept without observing that I was not alone; I thought only of how often I had knelt at that very place to listen to her. I could see her face, swathed in rare old lace, and shrunken with the sufferings of her last illness. The room seemed to me still warm from the heated temperature in which she always kept it.

Why was it that I, Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu was obliged, like any peasant girl, to sleep in the bed of her grandmother almost on the day of the latter's death? — for I chose to fancy that the princess, who really died in 1817, had expired the night before.

The room contained many things which ought not to have been there; which proves that persons who are busy with state affairs do not attend to matters in their own home; and it also proves that as soon as the princess was dead no one thought any longer of that noble woman, who will always remain one of the grand female figures of the eighteenth century.

Philippe, her footman, seemed to understand, in a way, why I wept. He told me that the princess had bequeathed to me all her furniture and other belongings. My father had left the grand apartments in the condition to which the Revolution had reduced them. Remembering this, I rose and asked Philippe to open the door of the little salon which leads to the reception-rooms, and there I beheld the dilapidation which I remembered of old. The niches above the doors, which once contained fine pictures, were still empty, the marbles broken the mirrors taken away. In my childish days I used to be afraid to go up the grand staircase and cross the vast solitude of these high rooms, so that I usually went to the princess's apartments by the little staircase which led to the private door of her dressing-room.

Her apartment (the one that is now mine) consisting of a salon, one bedchamber, and the pretty dressing-room in scarlet and gold I told you about, is in the corner tower nearest to the Invalides. The house is separated from the boulevard by a wall covered with

climbing plants, which mingle their shoots with the foliage of the elms on the roadway. If it were not for the blue and gold dome and the gray walls of the Invalides, I might fancy myself living in a forest. The style of these three rooms proves them to be the former state apartments of the duchesses de Chaulieu; those of the dukes must have been in the tower at the other corner of the building, separated from each other by the main body of the house and the middle tower, in which are those vast, gloomy, and sonorous salons I mentioned just now, shorn of all their splendor, and the terror of my childhood.

Philippe put on a very confidential air on seeing my astonishment. My dear, in this diplomatic mansion even the servants are discreet and mysterious. He told me, under his breath, that they expected to pass a law by which the émigrés would recover the value of their lost property. My father is therefore postponing the restoration of the house until this restitution takes place. The king's architect estimates the cost at three hundred thousand francs. This confidential communication made me drop upon the sofa in my salon. So! my father, instead of employing that sum in marrying me, preferred to shut me up in a convent! That was the reflection which came to me on the threshold of my home life. Ah! Renée, how often I have told you, with my head on your shoulder, of the happy days

when my grandmother occupied these rooms. She exists only in my heart, and you are at Maucombe, five hundred miles away from me,—the only two beings who loved or have ever loved me! That dear old woman with a young heart always waked up when she heard my voice. We understood each other so well.

That recollection suddenly changed all my first impressions. I felt there was something sacred in what, at first, had seemed to me like profanation. I even thought it sweet to inhale the vague perfume of maréchale powder which lingers here, sweet to sleep under these curtains of gold-colored damask with white figures, where her eyes and her breath must have left something of her dear soul. I told Philippe to polish and restore the lustre of the furniture and to make the whole apartment habitable. I arranged the rooms to suit myself, giving to each piece of furniture its proper place. In taking possession I looked carefully over everything to see how best I could preserve these precious antiquities, which I love. Do you want to know what the rooms are like? The chamber is all in white, a little yellowed by time, and the gold of the frolicking arabesques is somewhat tarnished from the same cause; but these effects are in harmony with the faded colors of the Savonnerie carpet, given to my grandmother by Louis XV., who also gave her his portrait. The clock on the chimney-piece was a present from the Maréchal de Saxe, and the porcelain ornaments beside it from the Maréchal de Richelieu. A portrait of my grandmother, taken when she was twenty-five, and now in an oval frame, hangs opposite to that of the king. The prince is not there. I like this frank neglect, without hypocrisy, which paints at one stroke her remarkable character. Once when she was very ill her confessor insisted that the prince, who was waiting at the door, should be allowed to enter. "Very well," she said, "with the doctor and his pills."

The bedstead is a four-poster with fluted canopy; the curtains are draped back in folds of splendid amplitude; the furniture is all of gilded wood, covered in yellow damask with white designs; the window-curtains are of the same material, lined with white silk of a kind which resembles moire. The panels above the doors are painted artistically, but I do not know by whom; one represents a sunrise, the other a brilliant moonlight. The fireplace is treated very curiously. It explains how in the last century they sat, literally, in the chimney corner. There the great events of the family took place. The brass fireplace is a marvel of modelling, the mantel of exquisite finish, the shovels and tongs of the finest workmanship, and the bellows delicious. The tapestry that covers the screen comes from the Gobelins, and is beautifully mounted; the fairy figures carved along the frame and on the fret

and bar are ravishing, - the workmanship as delicate as that on a fan. I wonder who gave her that dainty bit of furniture of which she was so fond; I wish I knew. How many times I have seen her with her feet on the bar, buried in her reclining chair, her dress raised nearly to her knees, taking up her snuffbox, replacing it, and taking it again from the little table on which it always stood between her box of pastilles and her silk mittens. How dainty she was! To the day of her death she took as much care of her person as she did when that beautiful portrait was made of her, and the flower of the king's court pressed around her. That reclining-chair, as I look at it now, reminds me of the inimitable movement she gave to her skirts when she threw herself into it. The women of her day have carried off with them certain secrets which painted their epoch. The princess had a turn of her head, a way of casting her words and looks about her, a peculiar language of her own, which have not descended to my mother. There was artifice and diplomacy in it all: at the same time kindliness, and design without a plot. Her conversation was prolix and yet laconic; she told a story well, and could paint an effect in three words. Above all, she had a freedom of judgment which has certainly influenced the cast of my mind.

From the time I was seven till I was ten years old I lived, as they say, in her pocket. She loved to have me with her as much as I loved to be there. This liking was the cause of more than one quarrel between her and my mother. Now, nothing fans the flame of a sentiment as much as the cold wind of disapproval. With what a charm she used to say to me: "Ah! here you are, little mischief!" when that eel, curiosity, had lent me its motions to slip into her room. She knew I loved her, and she loved my childish love, which was like a sun-ray to her winter.

I don't know what went on in her rooms at night, but she received a great deal of company. When I crept on tiptoe in the mornings to see if her window shutters were opened, I found the furniture in the salon all out of place, the card-tables in confusion, and a great deal of tobacco scattered about.

This salon is in the same style as the bed-chamber. The furniture is curiously turned; the woodwork has hollow mouldings à pieds de biche. Garlands of flowers, richly carved and very graceful, twine about the mirror frames and fall in festoons over the glass. Two beautiful Chinese vases are on the pier-tables. The chief tone of the whole arrangement is scarlet and white. My grandmother was a glowing and piquante brunette, as you can easily guess from her choice of colors.

I have found a writing-table in this salon which used to take my fancy as a child; it is inlaid with

silver, chased and embossed, and was made for her by a man named Lommellini, of Genoa. Each side of this table represents the occupations of one of the four seasons; the figures are in relief, and there are hundreds in each division. I have spent two hours all alone, picking up my recollections, one after the other, in this sanctuary where one of the most celebrated women of Louis XV.'s court (at which all the women were celebrated for their wit or their beauty) lived and died. You know how suddenly and harshly they separated me from her in 1816.

"Go and say good-bye to your grandmother," my mother said to me one morning.

I ran to the princess; she was not surprised at my departure and seemed indifferent to it; her manner was the same as usual.

"You are going to the convent, my treasure," she "You will see your aunt, - an excellent woman. I shall take care that you are not sacrificed; you shall be independent, and able to marry whom you please."

She died six months later, after confiding her will to the most assiduous of her many old friends, the Prince de Talleyrand, who once, when making a visit to Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, took occasion to tell me that my grandmother forbade me to take the yows. I hope that sooner or later I may meet the prince, and then, I dare say, he will tell me more of what she said.

14 Memoirs of Two Young Married Women.

So you see, my darling, that although I found no one to receive me, I have consoled myself with the shade of the dear old princess. And I have also begun the fulfilment of our mutual agreement; which was, you remember, to tell each other the most trifling events of our lives and surroundings. It is so sweet to know where and how our dear ones live! Tell me everything—the least little things that happen around you, even to the sunset lights among the trees.

October 1.

I arrived here about half-past three in the afternoon. At half-past five Rose informed me that my mother had come in, and I went down at once to pay my respects. My mother occupies on the ground-floor an apartment which is arranged exactly like mine; both are in the corner tower, or pavilion. I am just above her and we both have the same private staircase. My father is in the pavilion at the other corner of the house; but as, at that end, there is a great deal of space which at ours is occupied by the grand staircase, his apartment is very much larger than either of ours.

Notwithstanding the duties of their position now laid upon them by the return of the Bourbons, my father and mother continue to live on the ground-floor, where there is plenty of room for the reception of guests, — so vast are the houses that our forefathers built.

I found my mother in her salon, where nothing had been changed. She was dressed for the evening. As I went down step by step, I kept asking myself how she would treat me -- she who was so little of a mother to me that in all the eight years I had been in the convent she had written me but the two letters I showed Thinking it would be very false in me to pretend to an impossible tenderness, I made myself a kind of dutiful idiot, and entered her presence much embarrassed But the embarrassment was soon over. inwardly. mother received me charmingly; she put on no false tenderness; neither was she cold; she did not treat me as a stranger, nor did she press me to her bosom as a long-lost daughter; she behaved exactly as if she had seen me the evening before, and felt to me as the kindest and sincerest of friends; she addressed me as if I were a grown woman, and kissed me on the forehead.

"My dear girl," she said, "if you were really dying in the convent it is, of course, better that you should live here with us. You disarrange your father's plans and mine; but the day has passed when children obeyed their parents blindly. Monsieur de Chaulieu's intention, which agrees with mine, is to neglect no means of making life agreeable to you and letting you see much of the world. At your age I should have felt as you do; therefore, of course, I cannot be angry with you; you could not understand what it was we wanted of

you. You will not find me absurdly severe. If you have doubted my heart toward you, you will soon find that you were mistaken. Though I wish to leave you at perfect liberty I think you will do wisely to listen, at first, to the counsels of a mother who intends to be a sister to you."

The duchess spoke in a gentle voice, arranging my pelerine as she did so. She fascinated me. At thirty-eight she is as beautiful as an angel. Her eyes are blue and black, the lashes silky, the forehead without a line, the complexion so perfect that a stranger might think she painted. Her shoulders and throat are marvellous; her waist as slender and flexible as yours; her hands are of rare beauty, white as milk,—the nails sparkle in the light, so polished are they; the little finger stands out a trifle from the rest, and the thumb is like ivory. Her foot is the equal of her hand; it is the Spanish foot of a Demoiselle de Vandenesse. If she is as lovely as this when nearly forty, she will still be a beautiful woman at sixty.

I answered her, my darling, like a good, submissive daughter. I was to her what she was to me; in fact, I was even better, for her beauty conquered me; I forgave her neglect. I began to see how such a woman was inevitably carried away by her rôle of queen. I told her so as candidly as I might have said it to you. Perhaps she did not expect to hear words of love from

the lips of her daughter. The sincere homage of my admiration seemed to touch her; her manner changed and became more winning than before. "You are a good girl," she said, "and I hope we shall always be friends." That speech seemed to me adorably naïve; but I took care not to show her that I thought so, - for I had instantly perceived that I must let her think herself much cleverer and more astute than her daughter. So I made myself a mere silly girl, and she was delighted with me. I kissed her hands a great many times, and told her how glad I was she treated me as she did. I felt so much at my ease with her that I even told her of my fears. She smiled and drew me to her by my neck and kissed me on the forehead very tenderly. "Dear child," she said, "we have company to dinner to-day, and I dare say you will agree with me that you had better wait till the dress-maker has properly arrayed you before you make your entrance into the great world. So, after you have seen your father and your brother, you will return to your own apartments." I agreed to that very heartily. My mother's enchanting toilet was a first revelation to the eye of that social world of our dreams, - yours and mine. My father presently came in. "Monsieur, this is your daughter," said the duchess.

My father's manner to me was very tender; he played his part of father so perfectly that I thought it

sincere. "So here you are, my rebellious daughter!" he said, taking both my hands in his and kissing them with more of gallantry than paternity. Then he drew me toward him, passed his arm about my waist, and kissed me on the forehead and both cheeks. "You must atone for the injury your change of vocation is to the family by the pleasure your success in society will give us. You see, madame, that she will soon be a very pretty girl, of whom you may well feel proud. Here is vour brother Rhétoré. Alphonse," hè said to a handsome young man who now came in, "this is your sister, the nun, who cannot be persuaded to wear the habit."

My brother lounged up to me and shook my hand. "Why, kiss her!" said the duke. Then he kissed me on both cheeks. "I am delighted to see you, sister," he said, "and I am on your side against my father." I thanked him; but all the same I think he might have stopped in Blois to see me when he was on his way to Orléans to visit our brother, the marquis, in garrison. I now withdrew, fearing the company might arrive. I have made a few changes in my rooms, and have laid out on the scarlet velvet of my table all that I need for my letters to you, thinking meantime of the novelties of my position.

And now I have told you, my dear white darling, exactly, neither more nor less, how things have happened to me, a girl of eighteen, who has returned after an absence of nine years to the bosom of one of the most illustrious families in the kingdom. The journey had tired me; also the emotions of this return; so I went to bed, as we did in the convent, at eight o'clock, directly after supper. They have even given me the little Dresden china service the dear princess always used when the fancy took her to dine alone in her apartment.

II.

SAME TO SAME.

November 25.

The next morning I found my apartments put in order by old Philippe, who had even filled the vases with flowers. In short, I am fairly installed. The only trouble was that no one remembered that a Carmelite novice was sure to be hungry at an early hour, and Rose had much trouble to get me some breakfast, "Mademoiselle went to bed just as dinner was served, and she got up this morning just as monseigneur was coming home for the night," she said.

About one o'clock my father knocked at the door of my little salon and asked if I could receive him. I opened the door; he came in and saw that I was writing. "My dear," he said, "you will wish to dress

suitably, and also to make yourself thoroughly comfortable in these rooms; you will therefore find twelve thousand francs in this purse. That is one year's allowance, which I advance to you for that purpose. You can arrange with your mother to find another companion if Miss Griffith does not suit you; for Madame de Chaulieu will not, of course, have time to be with you in the mornings. You will have a carriage at your orders, and a footman." "May I keep Philippe?" I asked. "Certainly," he replied. "Do not feel at all uneasy about money; your own fortune is large enough to keep you from being any expense to your mother or me." "Should I be very indiscreet if I asked to be told how large my fortune is?" I said. "Certainly not, my child," he answered. "Your grandmother left you five hundred thousand francs, the amount of her savings; for she would not deprive her family of a single inch of land. That sum is invested in the Funds. The accumulation of interest added to it now produces about forty thousand francs a year. I wished to employ that money in making a fortune for your second brother; therefore by refusing to become a nun you have upset all my plans; but perhaps you will concur in them later. I shall expect great things of you. You seem to me much more reasonable than I anticipated. I need not tell you how a Demoiselle de Chaulieu is expected to conduct herself; the pride I see in

your features is my surest guarantee. In our family the precautions lesser persons take about their daughters would be insulting to us. Mere gossip on your account would cost the life of whoever presumed to utter it, or that of one of your brothers if fate were unjust to them. That is all I need say to you on that head. Adieu, my dear little girl." Then he kissed me on the forehead and departed.

After persevering for nine years in this plan of giving my money to my second brother, I can't explain to myself why it should suddenly be abandoned. My father certainly spoke out frankly, in a way I like. There was no ambiguity in what he said. My property was about to be given to his son the marquis. Who has had bowels of compassion for me? Is it my mother? or my father? or my brother?

I remained seated on my grandmother's sofa, with my eyes fixed on the purse my father had laid on the mantel-piece, pleased and yet displeased by this attention, which fixed my mind on the question of money. It is true I need not think about it any longer; my doubts are solved; and there is something dignified in sparing my pride any suffering on that account.

Philippe was busy all day in going from one shop to another to produce my metamorphosis. A celebrated dress-maker named Victorine arrived; also a linenmaker and a shoe-maker. I am as eager as a child to know what I shalf look like when I emerge from the sacks of our conventual garments. But all these work-people require such an amount of time! The corset-maker insists on eight days, unless I mean to ruin my figure. That sounds serious; so I have "a figure," have I! Janssen, the opera shoe-maker, assured me positively that I had "my mother's foot."

I spent the whole morning in these important occupations. A glove-maker took the measure of my hand. The linen-maker came for my orders. At my dinnertime (which was that of the family breakfast) my mother informed me that we would go together to a milliner for my hats and bonnets, — so as to form my taste, and show me how to order for myself in future. I'm as giddy from this beginning of independence as a blind man must be when he gets his sight. I can judge now what a Carmelite is to a girl in society; the difference is so great that you and I never had the faintest conception of it.

During breakfast my father seemed absent-minded, and we left him to his thoughts; he is intrusted with many of the king's secrets. I was completely forgotten; but he will remember me whenever I can be useful to him—I saw that. My father is an attractive man, in spite of his fifty years. His figure is youthful and wellmade; he is fair; his whole bearing is exquisitely graceful; his face has the speaking and yet mute expression

of a diplomatist's; his nose is thin and long; his eyes are brown. What a handsome couple they are! How many strange thoughts crowded into my mind as I saw clearly that these two beings, equally noble, rich, and superior, had nothing in common but their name; had no life together, and were merely united conventionally in the eyes of the world!

The élite of the court and the diplomatic circles were here last night. A few weeks hence I am to go to a ball given by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and be presented to the great world I want so much to know. A dancing-master is to come every morning, and I must learn to dance in a month, under pain of not going to the ball. Before dinner my mother had a talk with me about the governess, or companion. I said I would keep Miss Griffith, who was recommended to her by the Austrian ambassador. She is the daughter of a clergyman, and well brought up; her mother was a woman of rank; she is thirty-six years old, and will teach me English. The Griffith is still good-looking enough to have certain pretensions; she is poor and proud and Scotch; she is to be my chaperone, and will sleep with Rose; Rose is under her orders. I saw at once that I could govern my governess. During the six days that we have now been together she has found out that I alone take an interest in her; and I have just as thoroughly understood, in spite of her marble face, that

she will be very complying to me. I think she is a kind creature, though terribly discreet. I have not been able to find out what has passed between herself and my mother.

Here's another thing which seems of no great consequence. My father has declined the ministry which was offered to him. It was that which made him so absent-minded last night. He says he prefers an embassy to endless discussions on public affairs. He wants Spain. I heard all this at breakfast, - the only moment of the day when my father, mother, and brother see each other with any sort of intimacy. servants only come in when rung for. The rest of the time my brother, like my father, is out of the house. My mother dresses; she is never visible between two and four o'clock. At four she goes out for an hour's drive: she receives from six to seven when she does not dine out; and her evenings are spent in some kind of pleasure, — the theatre, balls, concerts, visits. In fact, her life is so full I don't believe she ever has a quarter of an hour to herself. She must spend a good deal of time on her toilet in the mornings, for she is divinely beautiful at breakfast, which is served between eleven and twelve o'clock. I begin to understand the sounds I hear in her apartments, which are below mine. She takes an almost cold bath when she rises, and a cup of coffee, cold, with cream; then she dresses. She is

never awake before nine, except under extraordinary circumstances. In summer she goes out early on horseback. At two o'clock she receives a young man whom I have not yet seen.

That's our family life. We meet at breakfast and dinner, though sometimes my mother and I take the latter meal alone; and I fancy I shall often have to dine in my own apartment with Miss Griffith, like the princess, for my mother has many invitations to dinner. I no longer wonder at the little interest my family have taken in me. My dear, in Paris there is a sort of heroism in loving those who belong to us, for we don't belong to ourselves. And how easy to forget the absent in the whirl of such a life. I see that, and yet I have not set foot out of doors and know nothing of it; I shall wait till I am less of a rustic and my dress and manner are more in keeping with this great world, whose rush amazes me though I only hear the echo of it from afar. Up to this time I have not been beyond the garden.

The Italian opera begins in a few days; my mother has a box. I am crazy to hear Italian music and to see French opera. I am beginning to shake off convent habits and am learning those of the great world. I am writing to you just before going to bed; and my bedtime is now as late as ten o'clock, the hour when my mother goes out, — unless, to be sure, she goes to some

theatre. Just think, there are twelve theatres in Paris! I read a good deal, but in a desultory way; my ignorance is crass. One book leads to another. I find the titles of several books on the cover of the one I am reading; but I have no one to tell me how to choose, and I find some of them very stupid. All that I have read of modern literature so far turns on love, -the subject you and I used to talk of so much; for is n't our fate made for us by man and for man? But oh! my dearest, how far these writers are beneath the ideas of two little girls named Renée and Louise! My angel! such trivial events, such queer behavior, and then, such mean and paltry expressions of feeling! Still, I have liked two books very much. One is called "Corinne," the other "Adolphe." Apropos of that, I asked my father if I could see Madame de Staël. My mother and father and Alphonse laughed. Alphonse said: "Where does she come from?" My father replied, "From the Carmelites, and we are silly to laugh." "My dear," said the duchess, gently, "Madame de Stael is dead."

"How can a woman be deceived?" I asked Miss Griffith when I finished "Adolphe." "Because she loves," replied Miss Griffith. Renée, do you think a man could deceive either you or me? Miss Griffith has ended by finding out that I am not more than half a fool, and that I really have a hidden education, — that

which you and I gave ourselves by discussing everything in heaven and earth. She sees that my ignorance is chiefly about external things. The poor creature has opened her heart to me. That laconic answer I mentioned above, set in the balance against various imaginable misfortunes, made me quiver. La Griffith warned me not to let myself be dazzled by what I was about to see of the world; to distrust everything, especially that which pleased me most. That's all she knows, and she can't tell me anything more. It is very monotonous. She is like a bird with one note.

III.

SAME TO SAME.

December.

My TREASURE, — Here I am, all ready to enter the great world; and I have been as silly as I can be in making ready for it. This morning, after much practising, I beheld myself duly and properly shod, corseted, laced, curled, dressed, and decorated. I was like a duellist before fighting; I practised with closed doors. I wanted to see myself under arms, and I was pleased enough to find I had a little triumphant and vanquishing air, which, I flatter myself, will be all-conquering. I examined and judged myself severely

I reviewed my forces, - putting in practice that fine maxim of antiquity: "Know thyself." I assure you I had much pleasure in making my own acquaintance. Griffith alone was in the secret of this doll's-play. I was doll and child in one. You think you know me? Well, you don't!

Here, Renée, is the portrait of your friend, formerly disguised as a Carmelite and now brought to life as a frivolous and worldly girl. Provence excepted, I am one of the handsomest creatures in France. Take that as the summing up of the present chapter. I have defects: but if I were a man I should fall in love with them. These very defects promise a great deal. When for more than two weeks one has daily admired the exquisite plumpness of a mother's arms, it is rather discouraging to see one's own as thin as sticks; but I console myself by knowing that the wrists are delicate, and the lines so soft that when the flesh fills up the hollows my arms will be as dimpled, round, and satiny as hers. The shoulders follow suit as to thinness; or rather, to tell the truth I have no shoulders, nothing but hard blade-bones which form two flat angularities. My waist has no flexibility, and the hips are rigid. Ouf! there! I've told the worst. On the other hand, this framework is delicate and firm, and health sends a pure, bright glow through the vigorous outlines; the blue blood of life flows in waves beneath a skin that is

almost transparent. Yes, and the fairest daughter of Eve is a negress beside me, and my foot is that of a gazelle, and all the outlines are delicate, and my features are purest Greek! There, mademoiselle! The fleshtones don't blend very well, that's true; but they are brilliant; I'm a very pretty green fruit, and I have the charm of greenness. In fact, I am like that face in my aunt's old missal, - don't you remember? - which rises from a crimson lily.

To continue, - my blue eyes are not stupid, they are proud; two mother-of-pearl lids with blue veins, fringed with silken lashes, surround them. My forehead is dazzling; and the hair, delightfully planted, is arranged in little waves of pale gold, darker in the masses, showing that I am not a faded, fainting blonde. but a Southern fair one, full of blood, vigorous to act and not be acted on. The hair-dresser wanted to plaster it down in two bandeaux and put a pearl hanging to a gold chain round my forehead, declaring that it would give me a look of the middle-ages! As if I wanted to be of any age but what I am!

My nose is thin, the nostrils well cut and separated by a very pretty pink partition; it is an imperious nose, rather scoffing, and its tip too nervous ever to grow coarse or red. In short, my dear darling, if my perfections are not enough to marry a girl without a dowry, I'm mistaken. As for my ears, they are charmingly modelled; a pearl at each tip looks yellow in them. My throat is long, and has the serpentine movement which gives such majesty; when in shadow it has golden tints. Ah! I do think my mouth is too large, - but it is very expressive; the lips are a fine color, and the teeth smile charmingly! And then, my dear darling, all is in harmony, -carriage and voice and everything! I try to remember how my grandmother swung her petticoats without ever touching them. I know I am handsome and graceful enough to follow my own fancies; I can laugh just as you and I used to laugh, and yet be respected. I can be merry and gay, and yet imposing. I shall know how to lower my eyes, and pretend to an icy heart behind that snowy brow. I can turn that swan-like neck like a melancholy madonna, and the virgins the painters paint will be leagues beneath me; for you know, Renée, I shall be far above them among the stars. When men speak to me they will be forced to modulate their voices.

So, my dear, I am armed at all points, and I can run the gamut of coquetry from bass to treble, from the solemn tones to the flute-like notes. It is an immense advantage not to be too uniform. My mother is neither gay nor virginal; she is exclusively dignified and imposing; she can only come out of that to make herself leonine; when she wounds she does not

know how to heal; but as for me, I'll wound and heal both. I am totally different from my mother; therefore we cannot clash,—unless we quarrel about the perfection of our feet and hands, which are exactly alike. I take after my father; he is supple and delicate. I have the manners of my grandmother and her tone of voice,—a head-voice when raised, but a melodious chest-voice in a tête-à-tête.

Renée! it seems to me as though I had only just left the convent. I am not yet of the world, I am all unknown to it. What a delicious moment! I still belong to myself, — like a flower just blooming and yet unseen. My angel, my darling! as I walk my salon looking at myself in the glass, seeing the innocent, ingenuous cast-off garments of the novice, the schoolgirl, there is something in my heart, — I know not what, — regrets for the past, anxieties for the future, fears of the world, of society, farewells to our white daisies, innocently gathered, carelessly stripped of petals. Ah! there was much in all that, but there were also fantastic ideas, which I here and now drive back into the depths of my soul, — where I dare not descend, and from which they came.

My darling, I have an outfit worthy of a bride! All my new possessions are laid in perfumed drawers of cedar-wood in my delightful dressing-room. I have ribbons, gloves, boots, and shoes in profusion. My

father has given me the jewels of a young girl, a worktable, dressing-case, perfume-bottles, fan, parasols, prayer-book, a gold chain, and a cashmere shawl. He promises to have me taught to ride on horseback. I already know how to dance! To-morrow, yes, to-morrow night, I am to make my first appearance. My dress is a gown of white muslin, with a wreath of white roses arranged in the Greek style. I shall assume my madonna air, for I want to seem simple-minded and get all the women on my side.

My mother is a thousand leagues from suspecting what I write to you; she thinks me incapable of reflection. My brother honors me with ineffable contempt, and shows me all the kindness of his indifference. is a fine young man, but whimsical and melancholy. I 've detected his secret, though the duke and duchess seem not to know it. Though a duke himself and young, he is jealous of his father; he feels he is nobody in the State; he has no position at court; he can't say, "I am going to the Chamber." Yes, I have guessed his secret, but then, to be sure, I am the only one at home who has sixteen hours daily for reflection. My father is deep in public business and pleasures; my mother just as busy with society; no one reacts upon me in the household, for they are always out; they don't seem to have time enough to live. I'm exceedingly curious to know what invincible attraction there

can be in social life to keep people out of their homes till two or three in the mornings, and compel them to take such trouble and endure such fatigue.

When I longed so much to come here, I never imagined such household estrangement or such intoxicating occupations. Now I know that members of a family may live together and not know each other. A girl who is half a nun arrives, and in two weeks she discovers more than the statesman himself knows of his own household. Perhaps he does see it, though, and pretends to this paternal blindness; that's another mystery to clear up.

IV.

SAME TO SAME.

December 15.

YESTERDAY, at two o'clock, I went to drive in the Champs-Elysées and the Bois de Boulogne, on one of those glorious autumn days you and I have so often enjoyed on the banks of the Loire. I then saw Paris for the first time. The whole scene of the place Louis XV. is truly glorious, but the glory is of man's making. I was well-dressed, demure, though inclined to laugh, with a calm face under a pretty bonnet, and my hands folded. No one smiled at me, and not the smallest

little man stood thunderstruck on his legs or even turned round at sight of me; and yet the carriage moved along with a slowness quite in keeping with my dignified pose. Stay! I'm mistaken; a charming duke did pass and turn his horse round abruptly; and that man, who thus saved my vanity, was my own father, whose pride, as he told me, was much flattered by my appearance.

I also met my mother, who sent me a pretty greeting, like a kiss, with the tips of her fingers. The Griffith, who was quite unconcerned, gazed about her on all sides; for my part, I think a young woman ought always to know where she looks. One man stared at my carriage, but not at me; he may have been a carriage-maker. I think I deceived myself as to the value of my charms; beauty, that rare privilege given by God only, must be more common in Paris than I thought. I noticed that mincing and coquettish women were much noticed. My mother, too, was immensely admired. There is some meaning in all this, and I shall find it out.

The men, I must tell you, dearest, struck me, in general, as very ugly; and I don't know what fatal genius invented their clothes, which are really amazingly awkward, when one compares them with those of mankind in previous centuries. The present dress is minus color, effectiveness, or poesy; it speaks neither to the

senses nor the eye nor the intellect; and it must be very uncomfortable, it is so pinched and skimping. The hat strikes me particularly; it is the section of a column, perfectly stiff, and does n't take the shape of the head; but they tell me it is easier to make a revolution than to improve the style of men's hats. The manhood of France recoils at the idea of wearing a soft felt hat, and so, for want of one day's courage, it condemns itself to a lifetime of that ridiculous chimneypot. And yet they say Frenchmen are volatile! But the men themselves are perfectly horrible, whatever they wear on their heads. I have seen such hard and weary faces, - faces in which there is neither calmness nor tranquillity; the lines all clash, and the wrinkles tell of balked ambitions and mortified vanity; a noble brow is rarely seen. "So these are Parisians!" I said to Miss Griffith. "Very amiable and witty men," she replied. I held my tongue. A spinster of thirty-six must have lots of indulgence in the depths of her soul.

In the evening I went to my first ball, and stayed close to my mother, who gave me her arm with a devotion that was well rewarded, for she carried off all the honors. I was a mere pretext for agreeable flatteries to her. She had the cleverness to make me dance with idiots who told me how hot the room was, as if I were frozen, and talked of the beauty of the

ball, as if I were blind. They all expatiated on the strange, unheard-of, singular, and extraordinary event of seeing me in society for the first time. My dress, with which I was delighted when I paraded up and down my white and gold salon all alone, now seemed hardly noticeable among the marvellous toilets of the other women. Each of those women had her attendant satellites; but they all watched each other out of the corners of their eyes; some, like my mother, were resplendent in beauty.

A young girl counts for nothing at a ball; she is only a machine to dance with. The men, with few exceptions, seemed to me no better than those I saw in the Champs-Elysées. They look worn out; their features have no character, - or rather, they all have the same character. The proud and vigorous faces I see in the portraits of our ancestors - they who joined moral strength to physical strength - exist no longer. There was present, however, a man of great talent who certainly stood forth from the rest on account of his personal beauty; but he did not give me the keen sensation I expected. It is true that I have not read his works, and he is not a nobleman. No matter what the genius of a bourgeois or a parvenu may be, I confess my blood doesn't tingle for such as they. Besides, I thought this particular man of talent so full of himself and so oblivious of others that it struck me

we must all be things, not beings, to these great When men of talent love they hunters for ideas. ought to cease writing, or — they don't love; something in their brain takes precedence of their mistress. I thought I saw all that in the behavior of this man, who is, they tell me, a professor, speaker, author, but whose ambition makes him the servant of all grandees.

Well, I soon decided on my own course. I thought it was very unworthy of me to be angry with the world for my want of success; and I began to dance without troubling myself any more about it. The fact is, I love dancing. I heard all sorts of stupid gossip going on about the unknown persons around me. It seemed to me without any point; but perhaps I needed to know certain things in order to comprehend it, for I noticed that most of the men and women took the keenest pleasure in saying and hearing particular speeches. Society evidently has a host of enigmas the solution of which seems rather difficult, — a multiplication of intrigues! I have sharp eyes and keen ears, and as to my inward perceptions, you know about them, Mademoiselle de Maucombe.

I came home tired, and glad to be tired. I told what I thought and felt very candidly to my mother, who was with me; and she requested me to confide such things to no one but herself. "My dear girl," she said, "good taste is shown as much in knowing what

things we may not speak of as in speaking properly of those we may."

This bit of advice taught me to understand what feelings we ought to keep silence about to all the world, beginning with our mother. I took in at a glance the vast extent of female dissimulation. My darling, I do assure you that, thanks to our brazen innocence, you and I can be two very wide-awake little spies. How much may be discovered from a finger laid on a lip, a word, a look! And yet my mother's caution made me timid in a moment. What! can't I even express the natural delight I feel in dancing? If so, thought I, what becomes of the utterance of real feelings? I went to bed quite sad. I am still under the shock of this first encounter of my frank, gay nature with the hard laws of the world. There's a shred of my white wool already left on the bushes by the wayside.

Adieu, dear angel.

V.

RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

October.

How your letter moves me, -- especially when I compare our fates. What a brilliant world you are about to live in! and in what a peaceful retreat am I destined to pass my obscure existence!

Two weeks after my return to Maucombe (I have told you so much about the château that I will tell you no more, except that I found my room just as I had left it, and am now able to enjoy the glorious view of the valley of Gémenos which I looked at as a child without really seeing), - two weeks after my return my father and mother, accompanied by my two brothers, took me to dine with one of our neighbors, Monsieur de l'Estorade, an old nobleman who has become very rich, as people do grow rich in the provinces, by saving. This old man was unable to save his only son from Bonaparte's rapacity. After buying him off from the conscription he was forced to let him join the army in 1813, as member of the Guard of Honor. After the battle of Leipzig the old baron heard no more of his Monsieur de Montriveau, to whom he applied for information, declared that he had seen the young man taken prisoner by the Russians. Madame de l'Estorade, the mother, died of grief after a search in Russia had proved fruitless. The baron, who is truly religious, practised the noble virtue you and I used to cultivate at Blois, - hope! Hope showed him his son in dreams, and he saved his income and his wife's property in the interests of that lost son.

No one ever dared to make light of that hope, which is now justified; and I have discovered that the unexpected return of the son from Russia is the real cause of my return from the Carmelites. How little we imagined, when our thoughts went wandering everywhere, that my future husband was slowly and painfully making his way on foot across Russia, Poland, and Germany. His hardships did not end until he reached Berlin, where the French ambassador facilitated his return to France. Monsieur de l'Estorade, the father, a small country land-owner in Provence, was not of sufficient consequence in Europe to make his son's name a passport.

The old man has lately bought a fine, though much neglected estate, which he intends to plant with mulberries from his own nurseries; and this, with the income from the mother's property, will give the Chevalier de l'Estorade a handsome fortune. baron now has but one idea, that of marrying his son, - marrying him, I mean, to some girl of rank. father and mother entered into his plans as soon as he told them his desire to obtain Mademoiselle Renée de Maucombe without a dowry for his son, and that he would settle upon her in the marriage contract the full sum that they might leave to her in their wills. At the time my youngest brother, Jean, came of age, he signed an acknowledgment of having received from his parents a sum equivalent to one third of their inheritance. That is how the noble families of Provence evade the infamous civil Code of the Sieur Bonaparte, which will consign more girls to the convent than it will ever marry. The French nobility is, however, as far as I can make out, divided in opinion on this subject.

This dinner, my darling, as you have already imagined, was arranged to introduce your Renée to the exile. Our servants all wore their gala liveries and their gold-laced hats; the coachman put on his high top-boots; all five of us got into the old state coach. and arrived with much majesty before two o'clock (dinner being at three) at the manor-house of the Baron de l'Estorade. The old gentleman has no château; it is a simple country-house, standing at the foot of a hill and looking up our beautiful valley, the pride of which is, undoubtedly, the old castle of the Comtes de Maucombe.

This establishment is simply, as I say, a manorhouse. The walls are of rubblestone in mortar, stuccoed with yellow cement, and roofed with hollow tiles of a fine red color. The windows, placed without regard to symmetry, have enormous outside shutters, painted yellow. The garden, which surrounds the building, is a true Provence garden, enclosed by low walls built of round pebbles laid in courses; an iron gate at the entrance on the high-road gives a somewhat baronial air to the place, though I must say it is rather thin and reminds me of Sister Angélique. The house has a stone portico with a miserable awning, and the garden, shrubs, and trees are horribly dusty and neglected. It is easy to see that the old baron has just vegetated from day to day, with no other thought than of piling up his savings for his son. He eats the same food as his two servants,—a Provençal youth, and his wife's former maid.

The rooms are scarcely furnished. Nevertheless, the whole house was furbished up in our honor, and the dinner was served on the family plate, much embossed, and blackened by time. The exile, my dear darling, is thin, oh! as thin as that railing. He is pale, he is ill, he is taciturn. At thirty-seven years of age he looks to be fifty. The ebony of his ex-fine hair is threaded with white like a lark's wing. His beautiful blue eyes are cavernous; he is a little deaf, which gives him some resemblance to the Knight of the Sad Countenance. Nevertheless, I have graciously consented to become Madame de l'Estorade, and to allow myself to be dowered with two hundred and fifty thousand francs, but on the express condition that I shall be mistress of the manor-house and be allowed to make a park around I have also requested my father to make over to me a little water-course which can be made to lead from Mancombe here.

In a month I shall be Madame de l'Estorade; for I found favor with the exile, my dear. After the snows of Siberia, a man could hardly fail to like a pair of

black eyes which, as you used to say, ripen the fruits they look at. Louis de l'Estorade seems much pleased to marry "the beautiful Renée de Maucombe," - that is the glorious appellation of your old friend the Carmelite novice. While you are preparing to harvest the delights of a grand existence, that of a Demoiselle de Chaulieu, in the Paris where she reigns, I, your poor little white doe, Renée, daughter of the desert, have fallen from the empyrean where we flew, into the vulgar realities of a fate as humble as that of a daisv.

Yes, I have sworn to myself to console this poor young man who has had no youth, who went from his mother's lap to the hardships of war, from the joys of home to the ice and toil of Siberia. The monotony of my days to come will be varied with country pleasures, humble, it is true, but pleasures still. I will extend the oasis of the valley of Gémenos to my new home, and I will make a shady park about me. I will have lawns that are always green, coverts on the hillside, and at the highest point of all I will build a pretty kiosk and see from thence the sparkling Mediterranean. Orange and lemon trees and all the choicest productions of botanical nature will embellish my retreat, and -I shall be a mother. Yes, a natural, indestructible poesy will surround us. By remaining faithful to my duties I shall have nought to fear. My religious feelings are fully shared by my father-in-law and the Chevalier de l'Estorade.

Ah! treasure mine, I see life stretching before me like one of those great high-roads of France, straight and even, shaded by the eternal trees. There will not be another Bonaparte in this century, and I can keep my children, if I have them, with me; I can train them, educate them, make men of them, and find my life in theirs. If you do not fail of your destiny you will be the wife of one of the powerful of this earth, and the children of your Renée may look to you for protection.

So, then, farewell, for me at least, to all those high romances and strange vicissitudes of which you and I, my dearest, were once the heroines. I know in advance the history of my life; it will be traversed by great events,—the cutting of the Messieurs de l'Estorade's teeth; their food, their clothing, the mischief they will do in my new plantations. To watch their dawning lives, to embroider their caps, to be loved and admired by a poor sick man whose comfort I am, and to look up ever into the valley of Gémenos,—those are to be my pleasures. Perhaps this country woman may some day live in winter at Marseille; but that's, a narrow, provincial stage which offers no danger.

No, I shall have nothing to fear, — not even one of those admirations which make us justly proud. We shall be interested in the silk-worms for whose benefit we sell our mulberry leaves. We shall know the ups

and downs of provincial life and the tempests of a household where quarrels are impossible, for Monsieur de l'Estorade makes known his intention of being guided by his wife. Now, as I shall do nothing to confirm him in that great wisdom, he will probably persist in it.

You will be, my dear Louise, the one romantic spot in my existence. Therefore tell me all your experiences: describe the balls and fêtes, and how you dress, and what flowers crown that dear blond hair. Tell me, too, all that men say and do; describe their ways. I shall be your double as you listen and dance; I shall feel when your hand is pressed; I shall hear you laugh. Ah! we shall often change places; I shall amuse myself in Paris, while you are the mother at La Crampade - for that, by the bye, is the name of my future manor. Poor Monsieur de l'Estorade, who thinks he is marrying only one woman! Will he find out that he has married two? Oh! what nonsense I am talking. Let me kiss you on both cheeks, - my lips are mine still; he has never ventured to do more than take my hand. I assure you we are most respectful; in fact, our conventionality is quite distressing. There! nonsense again! Adieu, dearest.

I have just received your third letter. Louise, I have about a thousand francs to do what I like with; will you spend them for me in pretty things for my new home which I can't get here or even at Marseille? While shopping for yourself think of the poor recluse at La Crampade; remember that I have no one of taste in Paris to make my purchases. I will answer your third letter very soon.

VI.

DON FELIPE HENAREZ TO DON FERNANDO.

Paris, September.

The date of my letter will show you, my dear brother, that the head of your house is no longer in any danger. If the massacre of our ancestors in the Court of Lions made us Spaniards and Christians whether we would or not, at any rate it bequeathed to us the prudence of Arabs; perhaps I now owe my safety to the blood of the Abencerrages which flows in my veins.

Fear made Ferdinand VII. so good a comedian that Valdés believed in his protestations. If it had not been for my cautions, the poor admiral would have been lost. The liberals will never learn what a true king is. The character of this particular Bourbon has been known to me for a long time; the more his Majesty assured us of his favor, the more I distrusted him. A true Spaniard never needs to repeat his promises. Whose says much means to deceive.

Valdés escaped on board of an English vessel. for me, as soon as the fortunes of my dear Spain were lost in Andalusia, I wrote to the bailiff of my property in Sardinia to provide for my safety. He sent some wily coral-fishers to await me off a certain point of the coast. While Ferdinand was exhorting the French to make sure of me, I had safely reached my estate of Macumer, and was living in the midst of bandits who defy all laws and perpetrate all vengeances. The head of the last Spanish-Arabian house of Grenada found himself in deserts equal to those of Africa, and mounted actually upon a barb in the great domain which has descended to him from the Saracens. The eyes of my bandits shone with joy and savage pride when they discovered that they were protecting their master, the Duc de Soria, an Henarez, from the vengeance of the king of Spain. I am the first of our family who has visited the island since the days when it belonged to our ancestors the Moors. Twenty-two carbines were instantly offered to annihilate Ferdinand de Bourbon, son of a race all unknown when our forefathers the Abencerrages came as conquerors to the banks of the Loire.

I expected to be able to live on the revenues of this great domain, which, alas! we have so ill cared for; but I soon found out my mistake and the veracity of Queverdo's reports. The poor man has twenty-two lives of men at my service, but not one copper farthing;

twenty thousand acres of plain and meadow, but not a dwelling; virgin forests, and not one article of furniture. Six million of francs and the presence of a master for half a century would be necessary to put these magnificent lands to any profit. I shall, however, think about it; refugees have plenty of time to think over their own affairs as well as over their lost cause.

At Marseille I heard of Riego's death; the painful thought came to me that my life, too, would end slowly, obscurely, in just such a martyrdom. Will it be living at all to have no country for which to consecrate myself, no beloved woman to exist for? "To love and conquer"—two aspects of one idea—was the law graven on our sabres, written in letters of gold on the arches of our palaces, sung and resung incessantly by the plashing waters of our fountains in their marble basins,—a law which evermore will uselessly incite my soul; for the sabre is broken, the palace in ashes, the living waters of the fountain are lost in the sterile sands.

Here, my dear brother, is my last will and testament. Obey it. You will now see why I restrained your ardor and commanded you to remain faithful to the reigning king. As your friend and brother, I entreat you to obey me; as your master and the head of our house I command it.

Go to the king; demand my dignities, my property, my duties, and my titles. He may shuffle and hesitate

and make a few royal grimaces; but you must tell him that you love and are beloved by Marie Heredia, and that Marie can marry none but the Duc de Soria. You will see him quiver with joy when you tell him that. The great fortune of the Heredias would have hindered his accomplishing my ruin; but if you step into my shoes and despoil me he will consent joyfully.

Yes, you must marry Marie; I discovered the secret of your mutual love, so long subdued. I have already prepared the old count for this substitution. Marie and I were obeying the wishes and conventions of our parents. You are handsome as a child of love, I am ugly as a grandee of Spain; you are beloved, I was the object of a secret repugnance; you will soon overcome the resistance that a sense of my misfortunes will rouse against you in the heart of that noble Spanish woman.

As Marie's own jewels can replace those I ask for, send me my mother's diamonds, which will suffice to make me independent. Send them by my foster-mother, old Urraca, the only one of my household I wish to retain. She alone knows how to make my chocolate.

During our short revolution my life was reduced to the necessaries of living. You will therefore find the revenues of the last two years almost intact in the hands of the intendant. That sum belongs to me, but as the marriage of a Duc de Soria will occasion great expense, we will share it. You won't refuse a wedding-present

from your brother, the bandit. Besides, I choose to make it.

The barony of Macumer being in Sardinia, and not under the rule of the king of Spain, I keep it. and it may afford me a country and a name, if, by chance, the opportunity is given me.

God be thanked, at any rate, that the House of Soria is safe.

At this very moment, while I am telling you that I am nothing more than the Baron de Macumer, the French cannon are announcing the return of the Duc d'Angoulême. You will easily understand why I interrupt my letter.

October.

When I reached Paris I had scarcely a hundred francs in my pocket. A statesman seems very petty when, in the midst of great catastrophes which he has not prevented, he thinks of his selfish interests. The vanguished Moors had horses and a desert; Christians cheated of their hopes have monasteries. However, my resignation is not yet despondency. I am not so near a convent that I cease to dream of life. Olzaga gave me, at great risk to himself, letters of introduction, one of which was to a publisher who is to us Spaniards what Galignani is to the English. He has obtained eight scholars for me at three francs a lesson. I go every other day to each pupil, so that I give four lessons a day and earn twelve francs — much more than I need for my daily wants. When Urraca arrives with the diamonds, I will rejoice the heart of some struggling Spaniard by handing my pupils over to him. I live in the rue Hillerin-Bertin, with a poor widow who takes boarders. My room faces south, and looks into a little garden. I hear no noise, I see verdure, and I spend only three francs a day. I am sometimes quite amazed at the calm, pure pleasure I take in this life of Dionysius in Corinth. From sunrise till ten o'clock I smoke and drink my chocolate, sitting at my window and watching the growth of two Spanish plants, a gorze or broom rising from a tangle of jessamine, gold on a white ground, an image that will ever cause a scion of the Moors to quiver with emotion.

At ten o'clock I start upon my round of lessons, which keeps me busy until four, when I return to dinner, and smoke and read till I go to bed. I could live this life for a long time. I like this mingling of work and meditation, solitude and intercourse with others.

Therefore, my dear Fernando, be satisfied and happy; my abdication is accomplished without one backward longing; like that of Charles V., it is followed by no regret, no desire like that of Bonaparte to revive the past. Five days and nights have passed since I wrote my last testament, but five centuries of thought have elapsed since then. Grandeur, titles, and wealth are

to me as though they had never been. Now that the barrier of respect between us has necessarily fallen, I can let you read my heart, dear brother. That heart, which gravity covers with an impenetrable coat of mail, is full of tenderness and unemployed devotion; but no woman ever divined this, - not even she who from her cradle was destined to be my wife. There lies the secret of my ardent political life. Having no woman to love, I loved Spain. Spain too has eluded me! Now that I am nothing, now that I can contemplate a destroyed myself, I ask my mind why life came to me and when it will leave me. Why has a race of chivalry par excellence given its earliest virtues, its Arab love, its warm poesy to its last scion? Will the seed remain within its horny envelope without budding, without shedding its eastern perfume from some radiant calix? What crime have I committed before my birth that I am unable to inspire love in the hearts of others? Was I, from the day I was born, a wreck cast up on a barren shore? I find in my soul the desert of my forefathers, lighted by a sun that scorches but enables nothing to grow there. Well, I will still be proud of my fallen race, my useless vigor, my wasted love, - old young man that I am! I will await here where I am, better perhaps than elsewhere, the last favor, death. Alas! beneath these foggy skies no spark can ever fall to light the flame of my smouldering embers. My last words must needs be those of Jesus Christ, - "My God, my God! why hast thou abandoned me?" Terrible words, the depth of which no soul has fathomed.

Fernando, believe how happy I am in living in you and Marie; I shall henceforth look upon you both with the pride of a creator glorying in his work. Love each other well, and always; give me no griefs; dissensions between you would do more harm to me than to yourselves. Our mother foresaw that events would one day fulfil her hopes. Perhaps a mother's desire is a compact between herself and God. Besides, methinks she was one of those mysterious beings who are able to communicate with heaven and bring back visions of the future. Many a time have I read on the lines of her forehead that she wished for Fernando the honors and wealth of Felipe. I once said this to her; she answered me with tears, betraying the struggles of a heart that should have been equally for one as for the other, but which an unconquerable love gave wholly to you. Thus her spirit will hover joyfully above your heads when you kneel at the altar. Ah! Donna Clara, will you then embrace your Felipe - at last? See, he vields to your beloved even the dear young girl you regretfully pushed into his arms. What I do now will be pleasing to the dead, to the king; God wills it. Reject nothing, Fernando; obey me and keep silence.

P. S. Tell Urraca to call me only Monsieur Henarez. Say not a word about me to Marie. You must be the only living being to know the secrets of this Christianized Moor, in whose veins dies the blood of the last great family of the desert as he ends his days in solitude. Adieu.

VII.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO RENÉE DE MAUCOMBE.

January, 1824.

What! married so hastily? Is that how one ought to choose a husband? At the end of a month to promise yourself to a man, without loving him, without really knowing anything about him! He may be deaf and dumb, — there are a dozen ways of being that! he may be sickly, disagreeable, intolerable. Oh, Renée, don't you see what they are doing with you? you are wanted to continue the glorious house of l'Estorade, and that's the whole of it. You will become a mere provincial. Are these the promises we made to each other? If I were you, I'd rather float about the isles of Hyères in a boat, hoping that some corsair would capture me and sell me to the Grand Seignior; at any rate I should be a sultana, and some day the Validé; I should turn the seraglio upside down and

inside out as long as I was young, and after I was old, too. But you, you are coming out of one convent to go into another. I know you; you are a coward, and you are just letting yourself be driven into this thing with the meekness of a lamb. Come to Paris; I'll give you advice; together we will turn men's heads and make ourselves queens. Your husband, if you really marry him, my poor darling, might make himself a deputy. I know what deputies are now, and I'd explain the whole mechanism to you. You could play that instrument very well, and live in Paris and become a fashionable woman. Oh, I warn you, I shall not let you stay in that manor-house with the cramped name.

Monday.

It is now two whole weeks, my dearest, that I have lived the life of the world; one night Italian opera, next Grand Opera, and after them a ball. Ah! society is fairy-land. The music of the Italian opera enchants me, and while my soul is swimming in divinest pleasure opera glasses are levelled at me, I'm admired! But, with a single glance, I can make the boldest young man lower his eyes. I have seen a number of charming ones, and yet, do you know, not one pleases me, none has given me anything like the emotion I feel when hearing Garcia in his glorious duet with Pellegrini in "Otello." Good heavens! what a jealous creature

Rossini must be to be able to express the passion of jealousy like that! What a cry it is: "Il mio cor si divide!" All this is Greek to you, for you have never heard Garcia; but you know what a jealous nature mine is. Shakespeare was a terribly sad dramatist. Othello lives for glory; he wins victories, commands, parades, reviews, leaving Desdemona in her corner; and Desdemona, who sees him preferring the stupidities of public life to her love, doesn't get angry! Poor sheep, she deserved death. Let the man I deign to love dare to do aught else than love me! For my part I believe in the long probations of the days of chivalry. I consider it was very impertinent and very silly of that young puppy to demur when his sovereign lady sent him to fetch her glove from the lion's den; she was reserving for him, no doubt, some dazzling flower of love, which he lost after winning it, the fool!

But I'm chattering on as if I had n't a great piece of news to tell you! My father will probably be sent to represent the king our master at Madrid; I say "our" master, for I am to accompany the embassy. My mother prefers to stay here; and my father takes me so as to have a woman about him.

My dear, this may seem to you all very simple, but there is something under it which it has taken me only fifteen days to find out. My mother would willingly follow my father to Madrid, if he could take with him,

as secretary to the embassy, a certain Monsieur de Canalis. But the king appoints the secretaries, and the duke dares neither to oppose the king, who is very obstinate, nor annoy my mother; so my diplomatic parent thinks he cuts the Gordian knot by leaving the duchess behind him. Monsieur de Canalis, the great poet of the day, is the young man who cultivates the society of my mother, and studies diplomacy with her daily from two to four o'clock. Diplomacy must be an interesting matter, for he is as faithful in his attendance as a gambler at the Bourse.

Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré, our eldest, solemn. cold, and queer, also stays behind; he would be crushed by his father in Madrid. Miss Griffith says he is in love with an opera dancer. The idea of loving legs and pirouettes! I have remarked that he goes to all the plays in which Tullia (that's her name) dances; he applauds all her steps and leaves the box immediately after she has danced them. As to my second brother, he is with his regiment, and I have not yet seen him.

So that's how it is that I am destined to play Antigone to an ambassador of his Majesty. Perhaps I shall marry in Spain; and perhaps my father hopes to marry me there without a dowry, just as you are being sacrificed to the broken-down exile. My father himself proposed to take me with him, and offered me his Spanish teacher to prepare me. I replied: "You-

want me to make a marriage in Spain, -- that's your He made no reply, but he gave me a shrewd castle." glance. He has lately taken to teasing me at breakfast; he studies me, and I baffle him. He, ambassador in petto though he be, is mystified about me. I am sure he has been taking me for a fool. He asked me what I thought of a certain young man, and also of two or three young ladies whom I have met lately. I answered by stupid remarks about the color of their hair, the difference of their heights, and their faces. My father seemed disappointed to find me so silly; he evidently blamed himself for having questioned me. "But of course, father," I added, "I don't say what I really think, because my mother lately showed me the impropriety of speaking my mind." "In your own family you can speak without restraint," observed my mother. "Well, then," I continued, "the young men seem to me more self-interested than interesting; more occupied with themselves than with us; and they can't, to tell the truth, disguise it. They change the expression of countenance they put on when speaking to us, instantly, and imagine, apparently, we have no eyes to see it. When they speak to us they behave like lovers; when they don't speak, like husbands. As for those young ladies, they are so insincere it is impossible to tell their character except by the way they dance; their shapes and movements are the only things about

them that don't deceive. I confess I have been frightened by the brutality of the great world. Things happen at supper-time, for instance, which give me an idea (of course in due proportion) of what public riots must be. Politeness very imperfectly conceals the universal selfishness. I certainly did expect the world to be very different. Women count for little; perhaps that's the result of Bonaparte's doctrines." "Armande has made astonishing progress," remarked my mother. "Did you expect me to be always asking for Madame de Staël?" I said. My father laughed and went out.

Saturday.

My dear, I have not said all. Here is something I keep for your private ear. Love, as we imagined it, must be most carefully hidden, for I can't see a trace of it anywhere. It is true I have intercepted a few glances given in a ball-room, but oh! so flat and meaningless! Our love — that world of marvels, of glorious dreams, of delightful realities, pleasures and pains alternating, smiles illuminating the character, words which enchant, happiness ever given, ever received, the pangs of absence, the joys bestowed by the presence of the loved one — of all that, nothing! nothing! Where and how did those splendid flowers of the soul come into being? Who deceived us; who has lied to us, - the world, or our own hearts? I have seen men,

young men, by the hundred, and not one of them is able to cause me the slightest emotion. They might show me admiration and devotion, and even fight for my sake, and I should still look at them with indifferent eyes. Love, my dearest, has one strange thing about it, a rare phenomenon: we may live all our life without ever meeting the being to whom Nature has assigned the power of making us happy. That reflection makes me shudder; for suppose that being should arrive too late! — what can you say to that?

For the last few days I have begun to be frightened about our destiny, and to discover why the women that I see have such sad faces under the layer of vermilion which the false joys of excitement put there. They all marry hap-hazard; that is how you are going to marry. A perfect storm of thoughts has been rushing through my mind. To be loved every day and all days in the same manner and yet differently, to be loved as much after ten years of happiness as the first day, - such a love would take years to produce; we must be long desired, we must awaken many curiosities and satisfy them all, excite many sympathies and respond to them. Can there be laws for the creations of the soul, as there are for the creations of nature? Will gladness maintain itself? In what proportion must the joys of love be mingled with tears? The cold tenor of that funereal, monotonous, perpetual convent life suddenly seemed to me a possibility; whereas the riches, glories, tears, delights, the fêtes, joys, pleasures of an equal, mutual, and sanctioned love sprang up before me as an impossible attainment. I see no place in this great city for the sweets of love, - for its sacred walks beside the hedges, with the moonlight shining on the waters and our hearts resisting entreaty. Rich and young and beautiful, I have only to love, and love might become my life, my sole occupation; and yet, during the three months that I have passed hither and thither in society with impatient eagerness I have found nothing to win me in the brilliant, keen, and greedy looks about me. No voice has stirred my heart, no eye has illuminated the world before me. Music alone has satisfied my soul; that alone has been to me what our friendship is. Sometimes I sit for hours at my window at night, gazing at the garden, summoning events from the hidden sources whence they come. At other times when I drive out and leave my carriage to walk in the Champs-Élysées I fancy that the hero who is to rouse my torpid soul is following me and watching me. I look for him, and all I see are the jugglers, the sellers of gingerbread. persons hurrying about their business, lovers trying to evade observation; and to the latter I want to say: "You who are happy, tell me what love is." But then I check these foolish thoughts and get back into the carriage, resolved to live and die an old maid.

Love is certainly an incarnation; what then are the conditions necessary to bring it about? We are not always sure of being in harmony with ourselves; what would it be if we were two? God alone can solve that problem. I begin to think I would rather go back to the convent. If I stay in the world I shall do things that are very like follies, for it is impossible for me to accept what I see. Everything wounds my sensibilities, my secret thoughts, the ethics of my soul. Ah! my mother is a happy woman; she is adored by her great little Canalis. My dear, I am seized sometimes with a horrible curiosity to know what they say to each other during those two hours.

Griffith says she has gone through all these ideas of mine; she used to long to tear the eyes out of the women she saw happy, and to scratch and vilify them. According to her, virtue consists in burying such savage longings in the depth of one's heart. What is the depth of one's heart? A reservoir of all that is bad within us?

Well, I am much humiliated not to have encountered, so far, an adorer. I am a marriageable girl, but I have brothers and a proud family and touchy parents. Ah! if that is what deters the men they are very cowardly. The rôle of Chimène in "The Cid" and the Cid himself captivate me. What a glorious play it is! Well, well, a truce to all this. Adieu.

VIII.

SAME TO SAME.

January.

My father and I have a Spanish teacher, a poor refugee forced to escape because he took part in the revolution the Duc d'Angoulême went to Spain to suppress; we owe a number of fine fêtes to that triumph. Though a liberal, and doubtless a bourgeois, this man interests me. I imagine he was condemned to death, and I have tried to make him talk, so as to learn his secrets. But he's as taciturn as a Castilian and as proud as Gonsalvo de Cordova; though, I must say, he is gentle too, and has angelic patience; his pride is not in arms like the Griffith's, it is inward; he obtains the respect that is due to him by keeping strictly to his duty, and he holds us at a distance by the ceremonious respect he testifies My father insists that there's a good deal of the grand seigneur about Monsieur Henarez, whom he calls Don Henarez among ourselves by way of a joke. One day I ventured to call him so to his face. raised his eyes (which he usually keeps lowered) and gave me a lightning glance which confused me; my dear, he has the most beautiful eyes you ever saw! I asked him if I had offended him in any way; and he replied in his grandiose Spanish language: -

"Mademoiselle, I have come here to teach you Spanish."

I own I was ashamed and blushed. I was going to reply with some choice impertinence, when I happened to recollect what our dear mother in God used to tell us; so I answered,—

"If you have any cause to complain of me say so; I shall be much obliged to you."

He quivered; the blood rushed to his olive cheeks as he answered with gentle emotion: —

"Religion must have taught you better than I can how to respect misfortune. If I were indeed a grandee of Spain and had lost my all through the triumph of Ferdinand VII. your jest would be a cruelty; but if I am only a poor teacher of languages is it not an untimely sarcasm? Neither is worthy of a young girl of your station."

I took his hand and said: "I invoke your religion and ask you to forget the wrong I have done."

He bowed his head, opened my "Don Quixote," and sat down to our lesson.

This little incident upset me more than all the looks and compliments and fine phrases I have received since I have been in society. During the lesson I watched this man attentively; he seemed to be unaware that I did so; he never raised his eyes to look at me. I then discovered that this master of ours, whom we had sup-

posed to be forty years old, is really no more than twenty-six or eight. Miss Griffith made me take notice of the beauty of his black hair, and also of his teeth. which are like pearls. As for his eyes, they are velvet and fire both. With these exceptions he is small and ugly. Spaniards are said to be deficient in cleanliness. but he is scrupulously nice and neat; his hands are whiter than his face. His back is a little bent; his head is enormous, of a queer shape; his ugliness. which is rather spicy, is aggravated by pits of the small-pox which seam his face. His forehead is very prominent; his eyebrows meet and are too thick, which gives him a hard look repulsive to the soul. He has the sickly, pinched look of children doomed to die, but who are kept alive by incessant care, like Sœur Marthe. My father says he is a miniature likeness of Cardinal Ximenes.

My father does not like him, and is always very stiff in his presence. His manners have a natural dignity which seems to make the dear duke uneasy, for he can't endure superiority under any form beside him. As soon as we both know Spanish we are to start for Madrid.

Two days after the rebuff Henarez gave me, I said, on the occasion of his next lesson, by way of showing a sort of gratitude: "I make no doubt you have left Spain on account of political events; if my father is

sent there, as they say he will be, we shall be able to render you some service, and even obtain your pardon if you are condemned to a penalty."

- "It is not in the power of any one to do me a service," he replied.
- "Is it that you will accept none?" I asked; "or is it really a matter of impossibility?"
- "Both," he replied with a bow, speaking in a tone which forced me to keep silence. The blood of my fathers boiled in my veins. Such pride incensed me, and I dropped the Sieur Henarez then and there.

And yet, my dear, there is something fine in not accepting anything from others. "He won't even take our friendship," I kept saying to myself as I conjugated a verb. Then I stopped short, and told him what I was thinking - in Spanish. Henarez answered very politely that all such sentiments demanded equality, which could not exist in our case, and therefore it was useless to discuss it. "Do you mean by equality reciprocity of sentiment, or similarity of rank?" I asked, determined to drag him out of a coldness which irritated me. He raised his formidable eyes, and I was forced to lower mine. My dear, the man is an inexplicable enigma. He seemed to ask me if my words were a declaration; there was joy, pride, an anguish of uncertainty in his look which wrung my heart. I saw plainly that these little coquetries, which mean nothing with

Frenchmen, are liable to have a dangerous significance to Spaniards; I retreated into my shell, feeling rather foolish. As he finished the lesson and took his leave he gave me a look full of humble entreaty. "Do not trifle with misfortune," it seemed to say. This sudden contrast with his hitherto grave and cold demeanor made a deep impression on me. It is horrible to think and to say, but I believe there are treasures of affection in that man.

IX.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU.

December.

ALL is said and done, dear love; it is Madame de l'Estorade who writes to you; but nothing is changed between us; there is only a girl the less. Don't be troubled; I thought soberly about my consent, and I did not give it heedlessly.

My life is now mapped out. The certainty of following a plain high-road suits both my mind and my character. A great moral force has settled forever what we used to call the chances of life. My husband and I have an estate to improve, a dwelling to beautify; I have a household to manage and render cheerful, and

an unfortunate man to reconcile with life. No doubt I shall also have a family to care for, children to bring up. Why be sorry, dearest? Ordinary life cannot be a grand or excessive thing. I admit that those immense desires which expand both soul and mind do not enter into a contract such as this, — at least, not apparently. Nevertheless, I do not think that the humble things to which I shall henceforth devote my life are devoid of passion. The task of making a poor man, long the plaything of misfortune, believe in happiness is a fine work, and will suffice to relieve the monotony of my existence. I see no ground for suffering, but I do see the chance of doing much good.

Between you and me, I do not love Louis de l'Estorade with the sort of love which makes the heart beat fast when we hear a step, which stirs us to our centre at the tone of a voice, or the glance of an eye; but neither is he displeasing to me. What will I do—I hear you ask—with that instinct for things sublime, with those strong and stirring thoughts which bind you and me together and are a part of ourselves? Yes, I admit I have considered that. Dearest, it will be a great thing still to keep those powers hidden in our hearts, to employ them silently for the good of the family, to make them the means of happiness to beings entrusted to us and to whom we owe our highest selves. Even so, the period at which such faculties are at their best

is limited in women; when passed, I shall look back and see that my life, though not grand, will have been calm, even, and without painful vicissitudes.

We are born to privileges; we can choose between love and motherhood. Well, I have chosen; I shall make my gods my children, and find my elysium in this corner of the earth.

That is all that I can tell you to-day. I thank you for the pretty things you have sent me. Give your capable eye to a further list of commissions, which I enclose. I wish to live in an atmosphere of luxury and elegance, and to get as little as I can in the provinces. You complain that I shall grow provincial. No, by living in solitude a woman remains herself, and does not take the color of her surroundings. I count on you to keep me informed as to the fashions. In his enthusiasm over the marriage, my father-in-law denies me nothing; he is pulling the house to pieces; it is full of workmen from Paris who are modernizing everything.

X.

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

January.

On; Renée! you have saddened me for days. Can it be that all that beauty, that proud and noble face,

those naturally elegant manners, that soul full of precious gifts, those eyes in which our souls may slake their thirst in springs of love, that heart brimming over with exquisite delicacy, that broad, clear mind, all, all those rare faculties, those triumphs of nature and of our mutual education, - treasures from which should issue, for passion and for love, choice riches, poems, hours as full as years, pleasures to enslave a man, - all, all, all are to be lost in a vulgar, common marriage, lost in the vacancy of a life which will soon become irksome to you? I hate the children you are going to have; they'll be ill-formed. Everything is mapped out and foreseen in such a life; you 'll have nothing to hope, or fear, or suffer. And suppose you meet, some glorious day, a being who awakens you from the sleep into which you are going? Ah, I have a cold chill down my back at the very thought.

Well, well, at any rate you have a friend; and no doubt you'll be the spirit of that valley; you will bathe in its beauties, you will live with Nature, you will penetrate into the grandeur of her things, into the slowness of vegetation and the rapidity of thought, and then—as you gaze at your smiling flowers you will be forced to question yourself. I know beforehand what you will write to me when you are going along your straight road, with a husband before and your children behind you, one in silence with a satisfied air, the others

screeching and tumbling about. Your misty valley with its hillsides bare or shaded with trees, your singular Provence meadows threaded with brooklets of transparent water, the many tones the light takes on,—all this infinitude about you, varied by God himself, will force you to think of the contrasting monotony of your life. Then, my Renée, remember, I am here; you will ever have a friend whose heart is untouched by social pettiness, a heart that is all your own.

Monday.

Dearest, my Spaniard is delightfully melancholy; there is something about him, I don't know what it is, so calm, austere, dignified, profound, that I must own he interests me exceedingly. The solemnity and silence in which he wraps himself is enticing to the soul. He is mute and superb like a dethroned king. Griffith and I study him like a riddle. How very queer! a teacher of languages actually gets more hold upon my thoughts than any other man has been able to obtain; and yet I have passed in review all the sons of great families, attachés to embassies and ambassadors themselves, generals and sub-lieutenants, peers of France, their sons and nephews, the court and society!

The man's coldness is irritating. The haughtiest pride fills the space he chooses to keep between himself and us; he wraps himself, as it were, in obscurity.

He is the one who coquets; I'm the daring one. This curious reversal amuses me all the more because it can have no consequences. What is a man, a Spaniard, a teacher? I don't feel the slightest respect for any man whatever, be it the king himself. I think women are worth much more than men, even the most distinguished men. Oh! how I would have ruled Napoleon! I'd have made him feel, if he loved me, that he moved by my will.

Yesterday I said a satirical thing which must have cut teacher Henarez to the quick. He said nothing; the lesson was just over; he took his hat, bowed, and gave me a look which makes me think he will never come back any more. I like that; there would be something dangerous in playing a second edition of "La Nouvelle Héloïse," by Jean Jacques Rousseau. I have just read that book, and it has made me take a positive hatred to love. A discussing and speechifying love, I think intolerable. Clarissa, too, she is a great deal too self-satisfied when she has written that long little letter of hers; but Richardson's work is a capital explanation, so my father says, of Englishwomen. Rousseau's seems to me a philosophical sermon in epistles.

Love, to my mind, is a poem entirely personal. All that writers tell us about it is both true and false. The fact is, my dear darling, now that you will know noth-

ing but humdrum love, I shall be obliged, in the interests of our mutual existence, to remain unmarried and have some grand passion, or how will you and I ever know life?

Write me exactly all that happens to you, especially during the first days you spend with that animal called a husband. I'll promise the same if any man loves me. Adieu, poor, dear, gobbled-up darling.

XI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU.

La Crampade.

You and your Spaniard, dearest, make me shudder. I write these few lines to beg you to dismiss him. All you tell me reveals one of those dangerous characters who, having nothing to lose, risk all. The man ought not to be your lover, and he can't be your husband. I will write you in detail about my marriage when I feel less anxiety than your last letter has caused me.

XII.

MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

February.

Dearest, this morning, at nine o'clock, my father sent to say he would pay me a visit. I was up and dressed, and I found him solemnly seated by the fire in my salon, far more grave and thoughtful than is his wont. He pointed to the sofa opposite to him; I understood his gesture and seated myself with a gravity which mimicked his so closely that he began to smile, though the smile itself was gravely sad.

- "You are as clever as your grandmother," he began.
- "Now, father, don't play the courtier here," I answered, laughing. "You have something you want to ask of me."

He rose from his seat in much agitation and talked to me for half an hour. This conversation, my dear, is worthy of preservation. As soon as he left me I sat down at my writing-table and tried to make a record of every word. It is the first time I have known my father to speak out all his thought.

He began by flattering me, and did it very well; I could not help feeling grateful for being understood and appreciated.

"Armande," he said, "I was strangely mistaken about you, and now I am agreeably surprised. When

you returned from the convent I took you for a girl like other girls, without any particular capacity, quite ignorant, reflecting little, and easy to please with trinkets and gowns."

"Thank you, father, in the name of Girlhood," I said.

"Oh!" he said, with the gesture of a statesman, "there is no such thing as real girlhood in these days. But as for you, you have an enlightened mind; you judge all things for what they are worth; your clearsightedness is quite remarkable. You are very satirical; you seem to see nothing, but you do see even the causes of the effects other people are examining. You are a minister in petticoats; there is no one here but you who can understand what I am going to say to you. I can therefore only employ you against yourself in the matter of a sacrifice I am about to ask of you. I shall explain to you frankly the plans I have long formed, and in which I still persist. In order to make you yield to them, I must prove to you that they are the outcome of noble sentiments. I feel myself obliged to lay before you political considerations of the highest interest for the kingdom, which would simply seem tiresome to any other young girl. After hearing what I have to say you shall have time for reflection; I will give you six months if you desire it. You are absolute mistress of yourself; if you refuse the sacrifice I am about to ask of you I shall submit to your decision and say no more."

This exordium, my dearest, made me really serious, and I said to him, "Go on, father."

Now, here are the exact words of which the statesman delivered himself:—

"My child, France is in a precarious situation, known only to the king and a few of the leading minds. But the king is a head without arms; the leading minds who know the secret danger have no authority over the men who could avert it and bring about better things. These men, the result of popular elections, cannot be made instruments. Remarkable as many of them are, they are only continuing the work of social destruction; they will not help us in strengthening the edifice. In a word, there are now but two parties in the State, - that of Sylla, and that of Marius; I am for Sylla against Marius. That's the outline of the matter. Coming to particulars, the Revolution continues; it is implanted in the law, it is written on the soil, it is fixed in all minds; it is the more formidable because the greater number of the king's supporters, who see that it has neither soldiers nor money, think it vanquished. The king has a great mind; he sees clearly; but he is over-persuaded day after day by the followers of his brother, who go too fast; he has not two years to live, and he wants to die in peace. Do you know,

my dear girl, what has really been the most destructive effect of the Revolution? You probably never thought of it. In cutting off the king's head the Revolution cut off the heads of all fathers of families. The Family no longer exists; we have nothing but individuals. In seeking to become a nation, France has ceased to be an empire. By proclaiming equality in the inheritance of patrimony the spirit of Family has been destroyed; public finances have been created; and so the way has been opened to feebleness among the leaders, brute force among the masses, the extinction of the arts, the reign of individual interests. We are now between two systems: either the State must be constituted through the Family, or it must be constituted on personal interests; democracy or aristocracy, discussion or obedience, catholicism or religious indifference. - there 's the question in a nut-shell. I belong to the small number of those who wish to resist what is called the people, — in the people's interest, be it understood. It is no longer a question of feudal rights, as fools declare, nor of the rights of the nobility; it is a question of the safety of the State, of the very life of France. The existence of any nation not based on the paternal power has no security. That power is the first rung in the ladder of responsibility and subordination which leads up to the king. The king is the country, the country, ourselves; to die for the king is to die for

ourselves, for our Family, which can no more die than the kingdom dies. Every animal has its instinct: the instinct of man is the spirit of family. A country is strong when it is composed of rich families, all of whose members are interested in the defence of the common wealth, - be it money, glory, privileges, or enjoyments; it is weak when it is composed of individuals held to no solidarity; to whom it signifies little whether they obey seven men or one, a Russian or a Corsican, provided they are each individually allowed to keep their bit of land; and these selfish fools don't see that it is certain to be eventually taken from them! We are hurrying to a dreadful state of things, in case of failure. We shall soon have none but penal or fiscal laws, - your money, or your life! The most generous nation on this earth will soon cease to be led by noble sentiments. We shall ourselves have made and developed incurable wounds in our own body, - for instance, universal jealousy; the upper classes will soon be indistinguishable; equality of wants and desires will be mistaken for equality of powers; recognized capacity, true superiority will be swept under by an invading flood of bourgeoisie. It was possible to select one man among a thousand, but how can you find him among three million similar ambitions, all clothed with the same livery, - that of mediocrity? This triumphant mass of the bourgeoisie does not perceive that it will have against it another terrible mass, — that of the peasant-proprietors; twenty millions of living agres, walking, talking, comprehending nothing but wanting all the more, barricading every avenue and controlling the brute force of the nation."

"But," I said, interrupting my father, "what can I do for the State? I feel no inclination to be the Joan of Arc of families, and die by slow fire at the stake of a convent."

"You are a little pest," he replied. "When I talk sense you reply with a jest; when I jest you talk to me as if you were an ambassador yourself."

"Love lives on contradictions," I said.

He laughed. "Think over what I have now said to you," he continued. "You will observe how much confidence and even grandeur there is in my speaking to you thus frankly; and perhaps events may still further help my projects. I know very well that toward you those projects are unjust and injurious; consequently, I ask your consent to them less from your heart and your imagination than from your reason. I see in you more reason and good sense than I have met with in others, I don't care who they are."

"You flatter yourself," I said, laughing; "for remember, I am your child."

"Well," he continued, "I cannot be inconsistent; whoso desires an end must take the means to it. We

owe an example to others. You ought not to have a fortune until that of your younger brother is assured. I wish to employ all your capital in providing an entailed estate and title for him."

- "But," I said, "if I resign my fortune to you, I hope you will not prevent me from living as I please and making myself happy in my own way?"
- "Provided," he answered, "that the life you choose to lead does not in any way detract from the honor, the consideration, and I may say, the glory of your family."
- "Well, well!" I cried, "you are depriving me rather quickly of the reason and good sense you gave me just now."
- "There is no such thing to be found in France," he said, rather bitterly, "as a man of station willing to marry a girl of high rank without fortune, and to settle a dowry upon her. If such a man could be found he would belong to the class of upstart bourgeoisie, and my views on that subject are, I confess, of the eleventh century."
- "So are mine," I said; "but why be so discouraging? There must be some old peers of France to be had."
 - "Louise," he cried, "you know too much!" Then he kissed my hand and left me, smiling.

Monday.

I received your short letter that same morning, and it has made me think seriously of the abyss into which

you evidently think I am about to fall. A voice seems to cry within me, "You will fall!" so I have determined to take precautions. Henarez has ventured to look at me, my dear, and his eyes trouble me; they produce a sensation which I can only compare to that of terror. I can't look at that man any more than I can at a toad; he is ugly - and fascinating.

For the last two days I have been deliberating whether I shall tell my father plainly that I do not wish to learn Spanish, and so get rid of Henarez; but then, after stern resolutions on the subject, I feel a desire to be stirred by the horrible sensations I have on seeing him, and I say to myself, "Once more, and then I'll send him away." My dear, his voice has such a penetrating sweetness! he speaks as Fodor sings. His manners are simple, without the slightest affectation. And oh, such beautiful teeth! Just now, as he left me, he seemed to notice how much he interested me, and he made a motion - a very respectful one - to take my hand to kiss it; but he repressed the impulse instantly, as if frightened by his own boldness or the distance he was about to cross. Little as it was, I saw the whole thing and I smiled; for nothing is more touching than to see the impulse of a socially inferior nature driven back upon itself. There is so much audacity in the love of a bourgeois for a girl of rank! My smile emboldened him; the poor man looked for his hat and either could

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not or would not find it, so I very gravely gave it to him. Tears moistened his eyes. There was a whole world of things and thoughts in that short moment. We understood each other so well that the idea came to me to give him my hand to kiss. Perhaps it was as good as telling him that love might cross the space between us. Well, I don't know what made me do it: Griffith's back was turned, and I did hold out to him, proudly enough, my little white paw, and then - I felt the fire of his lips, softened by tears that fell from his eves. Ah! my angel, I sat quite still and strengthless in my chair, thoughtful - I was happy; but it is impossible to explain how or why. What I felt was poesy, a poem. My abasement, of which I am now ashamed, seemed to me grandeur. He had fascinated me; that's my excuse.

Friday.

He is really very handsome. His language is elegant; his mind is one of remarkable superiority. My dearest, he is as learned and logical as Bossuet when explaining to me the mechanism of not only the Spanish language, but the action of human thought on all lan-French seems to be his mother-tongue. When I showed my surprise at this, he told me that he came to France with the king of Spain when very young, and stayed at Valençay.

What a change has taken place in his soul! He is no longer the same man. He now comes simply dressed, but exactly as a grand seigneur should be when he goes out on foot in the morning. His wit shines like a beacon-light throughout the lesson; he displays great eloquence. Like a weary man who has suddenly recovered strength, he has betrayed a soul hitherto hidden. He told me the story of a poor footman who let himself be killed merely to obtain one look from a queen of Spain. "What else could he do but die?" I said. That answer seemed to fill his heart with joy, and his eyes positively frightened me.

That evening I went to a ball at the Duchesse de Lenoncourt's. The Prince de Talleyrand was there. I asked Monsieur de Vandenesse (a charming young man) to inquire of the prince whether he had received an Henarez among his guests at Valençay, in 1809. Henarez, it appears, is the Moorish name of the Soria family, who were, they say, originally Abencerrages converted to Christianity. The old duke and his two sons accompanied Ferdinand VII. into exile. The eldest son, the present Duc de Soria, has just been deprived of all property, titles, and honors by the king on account of some private animosity. The ostensible cause was that the duke committed the immense mistake of accepting a constitutional ministry under Valdez. Luckily, he escaped from Cadiz before the entry of Monseigneur le Duc d'Angoulême, who, in spite of his good-will, could not have saved him from the anger of the king.

All this, which the Vicomte de Vandenesse repeated to me *verbatim* from the lips of the Prince de Talleyrand, gave me much to think about. I can't tell you with what anxiety I awaited my next lesson, which took place this morning. During the first quarter of an hour I examined Henarez, asking myself whether he were duke or bourgeois, without coming to any conclusion. He seemed to guess my thoughts as they rose, and to take pleasure in baffling them.

At last I could stand it no longer; I shut up the book hastily, stopped the translation that I was making aloud, and said to him in Spanish: "You are deceiving us, monsieur; you are not a poor bourgeois refugee; you are the Duc de Soria."

"Mademoiselle," he answered in a sad tone, "Unhappily for me, I am not the Duc de Soria."

I understood the despair he put into those words, "unhappily for me." Ah! my dearest, I defy any other man to put so much passion and so many things into three short words. He lowered his eyes and dared not look at me.

"Monsieur de Talleyrand," I said, "in whose house you spent those years of exile, declares that there is no alternative for an Henarez, — he must either be the Duc de Soria lately exiled again, or a servant of the family."

He raised his head and showed me two black and glowing eyes, flaming with pride and yet humiliated; the man seemed to me in torture.

"My father was in truth a servant of the king of Spain," he said.

Griffith did n't understand this way of studying; long pauses occurred between each question and answer. At last I said point-blank : -

- "Are you noble or bourgeois?"
- "You are doubtless aware, mademoiselle, that everybody in Spain, even the beggars, are noble."

Such caution made me impatient. Since my last lesson I had written a composition in which my imagination had amused itself. It was in the form of a letter from a friend, and in it I gave an ideal portrait of the man by whom I wished to be loved. I intended to give it to him to translate into Spanish. Hitherto I had always translated from Spanish into French, and never from French into Spanish. I now called his attention to this and asked him to show me how to do Then I asked Griffith to go to my room and fetch the letter I had received that morning from a friend. "I shall see," thought I, "what effect my programme of love has upon him, and what kind of blood flows in his veins." I took the paper from Griffith, saying, "See how clearly I have copied it" (for it was all in my handwriting). Then I held out to him the paper, or,

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if you choose to call it so, the trap, and I watched him while he read it. Here it is:

- "The man who will please me, dearest, must be proud and haughty with men, but gentle with women. His piercing eye must instantly repress everything that approaches to ridicule. He will have a smile of pity for those who jest on sacred things, which are, in truth, the poesy of the heart, and without which life would be a sad reality. I have a profound contempt for those who endeavor to take from us the living spring of religious ideas which are so fruitful in consolation. Therefore his beliefs must be simple as those of a child, resting on the unshakable convictions of a man of intellect who has examined his reasons for belief. His mind, fresh and original, will be without affectation or pretence; he can say nothing intrusive or out of place; it will be as impossible for him to bore others as to bore himself, because he will always have in his own soul rich depths.
- "All his thoughts will be of a noble nature, elevated, chivalrous, without egotism. In all his actions the total absence of self-interest and calculation will be noticeable. His defects will come from the very extent of his ideas, which will be beyond his time. In all things I must find him in advance of his epoch. Full of delicate attentions to the feeble, he will be good to all

women, but very difficult to render in love with any one woman; he will regard that question as too serious to treat lightly. It may be that he will pass his whole life without loving, while possessing in himself all the qualities best calculated to inspire a deep passion. But if he once finds his ideal of womanhood, whom he has seen in his waking dreams, if he meets the being who understands him, who fills his soul and casts upon his life the rays of happiness, who shines to him like a star through the dark, cold, icy clouds of this world, who gives a fresh, new charm to his existence and makes the silent chords within him vibrate, — then it is surely useless to say he will know how to recognize and appreciate his happiness. He will render that woman happy. Never, by word or look will he wound the loving heart which gives itself into his hands with the blind confidence of a child asleep in its mother's arms; for if that heart were awakened from so sweet a dream it would be rent in twain, - it could never embark on that ocean without putting all its future on the venture.

"This man will necessarily have the demeanor, countenance, carriage, and manner of doing even the smallest things which characterize superior beings who are simple and without assumption. He may be ugly, but his hands will be beautiful; his upper lip will be slightly curled with an ironical and disdainful smile for the common and the indifferent; he will reserve for those he loves the bright celestial rays of a glance full of soul."

"Will mademoiselle," he said in Spanish and in a voice of emotion, "permit me to keep this paper in memory of her? This is the last lesson I shall have the honor of giving her; and that which I receive from this letter may become my eternal rule of conduct. I left Spain a fugitive, without money; but I have now received from my family a sum sufficient for my needs. I shall have the honor to send some poor Spaniard to take my place as teacher."

These words seemed to me to mean, "The play has lasted long enough."

He rose with extreme dignity, and left me somewhat confounded by this delicacy in a man of his class. Then he went downstairs and asked to see my father. At dinner my father said, smiling:—

- "Louise, you have been taking lessons of a Spanish grandee, an ex-minister of the king of Spain and a man condemned to death."
 - "Yes, the Duc de Soria," I replied.
- "Duke, no," said my father, "he is no longer that; he now takes the title of Baron de Macumer, from a domain he still retains in Sardinia. He strikes me as very original."
 - "Don't insult with that word, which means sarcasm

and contempt when you say it, a man who is your equal, and who has," I added, "a noble soul."

"Madame la Baronne de Macumer," said my father, giving me one of his sarcastic looks.

I dropped my eyes.

- "Dear me!" said my mother, "Henarez must have met the Spanish ambassador on the portico."
- "Yes," replied my father. "The ambassador asked me if I was conspiring against the king, his master. But for all that he bowed to the ex-grandee with much deference, and declared that he put himself at his orders."

All this, my dear Renée, happened two weeks ago, and for fifteen days I have not seen the man who loves me—for he does love me. What is he doing? I would I were a fly, a mouse, a sparrow. I would I could see him, alone, in his own room, without his perceiving me. There's a man to whom I could say: "Go, die for me!" and he would go; at least, I think so. And so—so, Renée, there is a man in Paris of whom I think; whose glance can inundate my soul with light. Oh! he's an enemy, I must tread him under my feet. What! can there be a man without whom I cannot live,—a man who is necessary to me? You marry, and I—love! At the end of four short months how these white doves who flew so high have fallen into the slough of reality!

Sunday.

Last night at the Italian opera I felt I was looked at; my eyes were magnetically attracted by two eves of fire, shining like two carbuncles, in a dark corner of the orchestra. Henarez never took his eyes from me. The monster chose the one spot from which he could see me, and there he stayed. I don't care what he is in politics, but he has the genius of love. Renée, "behold the point we now have reached," as the great Corneille saith.

XIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADEMOISELLE DE CHAULIEU.

LA CRAMPADE, February.

MY DEAR LOUISE, - Before writing to you I did well to wait. But now that I know, or rather have learned, many things, I ought to tell them to you for your future happiness. There is so much difference between a young girl and a married woman that the young girl can no more conceive of the latter than the married woman can return to girlhood.

I preferred to become the wife of Louis de l'Estorade rather than return to the convent. That's the plain truth. After making quite sure that if I did not marry Louis I should return to the convent, I resigned myself, as girls say. Having resigned myself, I set to work to examine my situation, so as to make the best of it.

At first the serious nature of the engagements I was taking filled me with terror. Marriage is a thing for life, whereas falling in love is only a matter of pleasure: marriage has to last after those pleasures have disappeared, and it gives birth to interests far more dear than those which first unite a man and woman. haps nothing more is really needed for a happy marriage than a sincere friendship, which covers many human imperfections with its harmonies. Nothing stood in the way of my having such a friendship with Louis de l'Estorade. Having determined not to expect in marriage the joys of that love about which we used to think so often and with such dangerous enthusiasm, I began to feel a sort of gentle tranquillity within me. "If I cannot have love," I said to myself, "why not seek for happiness. Besides, I am loved, and I will let myself be loved. My marriage will not be servitude; on the contrary, I shall always be in a position to command. What objection can there be to that state of things, for a woman who desires to remain the absolute mistress of herself?"

The difficult question of being married without marriage was settled in a conversation between Louis and me, in which he disclosed the excellence of his character and the sweetness of his soul. My dearest, I

wanted to remain in that beautiful period of the hope and growth of love which leaves to the soul its virginity. To grant nothing to mere duty, to the law, to follow one's own impulse only, to keep my freedom of will—ah! that was surely a good and noble thing! This agreement, which is against that of the laws, and of the sacrament itself, could only pass between Louis and myself.

This difficulty - the first that I perceived - was all that caused the slight delay in my marriage. If at the outset I was resolved to accept everything rather than return to the convent, it is natural that I should want to obtain all I could after making up my mind to the worst; and then you know, dear, you and I want all things! I examined Louis as best I could, saying to myself: "Have misfortunes made him good or bad, kind or harsh?" By dint of watching him I discovered that his love amounted to worship. When I once felt myself uplifted to the position of an idol, when I saw him turn pale and tremble at a look, I felt that I might dare all. I drew him apart in one of our country walks and cautiously questioned him. I made him talk to me; I asked for his ideas, his plans, what he expected our future to be. My questions seemed to him such proofs of reflection, and touched so precisely on the weak spots of that dreadful dual life, that Louis, as he has since told me, was alarmed at such reasoning in a girl.

As for me, I listened to his answers; they were confused and involved, like those of a person who has lost his self-possession; and I presently discovered that fate had given me an adversary who was less able than I just because he divined, what you used to call so 'magniloquently, my great soul. Poor fellow! broken by sufferings and privation he looks upon himself as a wreck, and, as he told me, three fears overcame him. In the first place, he is thirty-seven and I am seventeen. and he looked with horror on the twenty years difference between us. Then, it is agreed and understood that I am very beautiful, and Louis could not help seeing and knowing regretfully that sufferings have robbed him of his youth. Besides all that, he felt me to be superior as a woman to himself as a man. Forced into distrust of himself by these three visible inferiorities, he feared he was not fit to make me happy and was only accepted by me as a pis aller. He said to me one evening, hesitatingly, that I would not have taken him unless to escape the convent.

"That is true," I answered gravely. My dear friend, he then caused me the first great emotion of all those that come to us through men. I was struck to the heart when I saw two heavy tears rolling from his eyes.

"Louis," I said in a comforting voice, "it depends on you to make this marriage of convenience a marriage to which I can give my fullest consent. What I am going to ask of you requires a far greater abnegation on your part than the utmost devotion of your love, sincere as that may be. Can you, will you rise to friendship such as I understand it? We can have but one real friend in life, and I would fain be yours. Friendship is the bond between two equal souls, uniting their strength, but nevertheless, independent. Let us be friends and partners, bearing our life together. Leave me my independence. I do not forbid you to inspire in me the love you say you feel for me; but I do not wish to be your wife until I feel I can be. When that time comes I will obey the feeling instantly. I do not ask you to make this friendship cold, or to refrain from troubling it with words of love; I will try, myself, to make our affection perfect. I do not wish to seem to you capricious or prudish, for that I am not; and I think you too much of an honorable gentleman not to save me from all outward remark, and to keep up, at any rate, the appearances of marriage."

My dear, I have never seen any one so happy as Louis when I made him my proposition; his eyes shone; happiness seemed to have quenched his tears.

"Be sure of one thing," I added; "there is nothing fantastic in what I ask of you. It comes from my immense desire to gain your esteem. If you owed me only to marriage, to legal and religious formalities.

would you always be as glad as if your love were crowned by me? And think, if I became your wife and a mother through passive obedience, as my dear, honored mother tells me I should — if I had a child, do you think I could love it as if it were the son of my will and heart? It may not be necessary for us to please each other as much as lovers seek to do, but remember that we must not displease each other. We are about to enter upon a trying and dangerous situation. We are to live in the country; we ought to guard against all instability of feelings. Let us make our lives of an even tenor; wise hearts can surely forearm themselves against disillusions, and the misery of changed feelings."

He was greatly surprised to find that I had reasoned out this matter in my own mind, but he made me a solemn promise; after which I took his hand and pressed it affectionately.

We were married the following week. Sure of keeping my liberty I threw myself gayly into all the insipid preparations for the various ceremonies. I was able to be my own natural self, and I've no doubt everybody thought I was a deep one,—to use one of our Blois expressions. They took me, I know, for a shrewd girl; though in reality I was only delighted with a new situation and the many resources I had managed to provide myself with. Dearest, I had seen, as in a vision, the difficulties of my life, and I longed sincerely

to make the happiness of that man. Now, it is certain that living in solitude as we shall do, if a woman does not maintain her supremacy marriage must become intolerable in the long run. Conjugal love, as I conceive it, should clothe a woman with hope, should render her supreme, should give her an inexhaustible vital force, a warmth of life which is able to bring all things to fruition around her. The more she is mistress of herself, the more able she is to bring love and happiness into the world.

I have exacted a promise from Louis that the deepest secrecy shall surround our internal arrangements. A man who is thought to be controlled by a woman (as the world regards it) is justly open to ridicule. The influence of a woman should be absolutely secret; it is a mystery; in all things our gift lies there. Having undertaken to raise this broken nature, to restore the qualities I see in it to their pristine lustre, I desire that the results I obtain should seem to come spontaneously from Louis himself. Such is the task I set before me; it is a fine one, and it suffices for a woman's glory. I am almost proud of this secret thought which fills my life, this plan on which my efforts will all be spent, while known to none but God and you.

I may say now that I am almost happy; and perhaps I should not be as happy if I could not tell all I feel to a beloved friend - for I cannot tell it to him; my happiness would wound him, and therefore I must hide He has, my dearest, the delicacy of a woman, like all men who have suffered much. For two months we remained to each other what we were before our marriage. I studied, as you can well imagine, a crowd of little personal questions, on which love depends far more than we think. In spite of my coldness, that suffering soul expanded; I saw his face change its expression and grow young again. The elegance I brought into the house cast its reflections on his whole person and transformed it. Insensibly I grew accustomed to him; I made him another myself. I discovered as I watched him the correspondence of his soul to his countenance. The animal we call a husband - that 's your expression — disappeared. At last I found — on some sweet evening, but I do not well know which, a lover whose words went to my soul and on whose arm I rested with unspeakable pleasure; nothing seemed lacking to our love, neither the delicacy nor the mysterious grace which our imaginations, dear, had always asked for it.

I will admit to you, that in spite of all this, again I stipulated for my liberty of will. I cannot tell you all my reasons, and yours is certainly the only soul into which I could pour this semi-confidence. Even when belonging wholly to one's husband, beloved or not. I

think we lose much by not concealing our sentiments and the judgment that we form of marriage. For myself, the only joy that I have had, but that is celestial, comes from the certainty of bringing back to life this suffering soul intrusted to me. Louis has renewed his youth and strength; his gayety has returned to him; he is no longer the same man. I have wiped out, like a fairy, even the memory of his sufferings. I have metamorphosed him; he has grown charming. Sure of pleasing me, his mind unfolds and displays all sorts of new qualities.

To be the living principle of a man's welfare when that man knows it and mingles gratitude with love — ah! dearest, that certainty develops a power in the soul which surpasses that of love, so-called. That impetuous and lasting power, one, yet diverse, generates the Family, that glorious work of womanhood, which I now am able to perceive in all its fruitful beauty.

The old father is no longer miserly; he gives me blindly all I wish. The servants are gay and cheerful. Louis's happiness shines upon this home in which I reign by love. The old count enters heartily into all the improvements. Not to seem a blot on my luxury, he has lately adopted, just to please me, the dress, and with the dress the manners of the present day. We have English horses, a coupé, a calèche and a tilbury.

Our servants are in plain clothes, but very stylish. I give all my mind — I'm not joking — to the business of managing my household with due economy, and providing it with as much enjoyment as I can at the least possible cost.

I have already put into Louis's head the necessity of making roads, so as to deserve the reputation of a man concerned in the welfare of his neighborhood. I have also spurred him on to increase his mental attainments. I hope to see him before long a member of the councilgeneral of the department, through the influence of my family and that of his own mother. I have told him plainly that I am ambitious, that I think it a very good plan for his father to continue the management of our property, and make our savings for us, because I want him wholly devoted to politics; I wish that to be his career, and then, if we have children, I shall see them happy and useful in serving the State. I told him that he must, on pain of losing my esteem and affection, be elected deputy from the department at the coming elections. My family will help his canvass, and if he succeeds we shall pass our winters in Paris. Ah! my darling, I wish you could have seen with what ardor he obeyed me! I saw then how much he loved me. Yesterday he wrote me the following letter from Marseille, whither he had gone for only a few hours: ---

"When you permitted me to love you, my tender Renée, I began to believe in happiness; but now I see no end to it. The past is no longer anything but a vague memory, a shadow needed to bring forth the splendor of that happiness. When I am near you, love transports me to the point of depriving me of the power of expressing it; I can then only admire and adore you. Words come to me when we are parted. You are beautiful indeed, with a beauty so grave, so majestic, that time will scarcely alter it; and though the love of a married pair does not depend as much on beauty as on feelings - which are exquisite in you - let me tell you here that the certainty of seeing you always beautiful gives me a delight which increases with every glance I cast upon you. The harmony and the dignity of the lines of your face, which reveals your noble soul, show something unspeakably pure beneath the ivory tones of the skin. The light in your black eyes and the frank outline of your brow tell of lofty virtues, of steadfast loyalty, of a heart made to meet the storms of life should any come. Nobility is the distinctive quality of your nature; I do not pretend to inform you of this; I simply write it to show you that I know the full value of the treasure I possess.

"The little that you grant me is and will be happiness, in years to come, as at present; for I feel all that there is of grandeur in the promise we have made to respect each other's liberty. We shall be free in spite of the tie, the close chain, that binds us; we shall owe each proof of tenderness to the loving will of the one who grants it. I shall be all the more proud of winning you thus because I now know the value you attach to that conquest.

"You can never speak or breathe, or act or think without exciting, more and more, the admiration that I feel for the

graces of your soul and of your body. There is something in you—I know not what it is—something divine, wise, enchanting, which joins in one accord, reflection, honor, pleasure, hope; in other words, which gives to love an extent, an horizon, greater than that of this life. Oh! my angel, may the genius of love be faithful to me, and may the future be ever full of that pure passion by the help of which you have embellished my whole existence.

"When thou art a mother I shall see thee proud of the vigor of thy life, I shall hear thee, in that voice so sweet, with those ideas so delicate, so new, so carefully well-rendered, blessing the love that has refreshed my soul, redeemed my faculties and is my pride, that love from which I draw, as from a magic well-spring, a new life. I am indeed another being. Yes, I will be all you wish me to be; I will become a man who is useful to our country; and on you shall shine the glory, the cause and principle of which will be your approval."

Dear, that is how I am forming him. The style is a little fresh; but a year hence he'll do better. Louis is in the first transports; but I know he will come to that equable and continued sensation of happiness which a happy marriage brings when a woman and a man, knowing themselves thoroughly and sure of one another, have found the secret of varying the infinite and of putting charm into the very foundations of their life. This glorious secret of truly wedded pairs I see it, and I wish to possess it. Please observe that he thinks himself loved, — ah, the conceit of man! — loved

as though he were not my husband. However, I am not yet beyond that amount of attachment which gives us strength to bear many things. And yet, Louis is most amiable, he has great equability of character; he does simply actions which other men would boast of. If I do not love him, he is at least very dear to me.

So, dearest, behold the black hair and the black eyes and what you call my imperial air and person elevated to the rank of sovereign power. Perhaps a few years from now you and I will be laughing together happily in Paris; whence I shall bring you back sometimes to my beautiful oasis in Provence. Oh, Louise! don't lose the beautiful future we could have together. Don't commit those follies your last letter threatened me with. I have married an old young man; do you find some young old one in the Chamber of peers and marry him. That's in the line of your career — but that Spaniard? oh, no!

XIV.

THE DUC DE SORIA TO THE BARON DE MACUMER.

MADRID.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — You cannot make me Duc de Soria, without my acting as the Duc de Soria. If I had to think of you as a wanderer, without the comforts that money gives. my happiness would be intolerable to

me. Neither Marie nor I are willing to marry until we know that you accept the sum we have sent you by Urraca. These two millions are the fruit of your own economy and Marie's.

We have prayed for your happiness kneeling together before the altar; and with what fervor! ah, God alone knows that! My brother! surely our prayers will be granted. The love that you seek, the consolation of your exile, will come to you from heaven. Marie wept as she read your letter; you have her utmost admiration.

As for me, I accept your proposal for the sake of our house, but not for my own sake. The king behaved exactly as you expected. Ah, you flung him his satisfaction so disdainfully, as a keeper flings meat to a tiger, that, to avenge you, I longed to make him feel how you had crushed him by your grandeur.

The only thing that I have taken for myself, dear beloved brother, is my happiness, my Marie. For that, I shall ever be to you in my own sight as a creature before his Creator. There will be in my life and in Marie's one day as perfect as that of our happy marriage; I mean the one on which we hear that your heart is understood, that a woman loves you as you should be, as you desire to be loved.

Do not forget that if, as you say, you live in us, we live in you. You can write to us safely under cover to the Nuncio, sending your letters via Rome. The French ambassador in Rome will no doubt transmit them to the Secretary of State, Monsignore Bemboni, who will receive instructions from the legate. All other ways of communicating would be dangerous.

Adieu, dear exile, dear despoiled one. Be proud of the happiness you have given us if you cannot be happy in it; but God will surely hear our prayers for you.

FERNANDO.

XV.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

An! my angel, how philosophical marriage has made you! Your dear face must have turned yellow when you wrote me all those dreadful thoughts about human life and our duties.

Do you seriously think you will convert me to a humdrum marriage by this programme of underground labors? Alas! alas! is it to this that all our wise meditations on life and love have brought you? We left the convent clothed with our innocence and armed at all points with reflections; and yet the lance of this first and purely mental experience of things has got through our armor and staggered you. If I did not

know you for the purest and most angelic creature in the world I should say that your calculations showed actual depravity. My dearest, can it be that in the interests of this country life of yours you mean to put your happiness in a pint pot, and treat love as you might your timber! Oh, I'd rather perish through the violent convulsions of my heart than live in the dreariness of your virtuous arithmetic.

You and I are both educated girls, - educated from having deeply reflected on a few things; but, my dearest, philosophy without love, or with a poor or false love, is the most horrible of conjugal hypocrisies. I am afraid the greatest simpleton on earth would sooner or later discover the owl of wisdom blinking in your bower of roses, - a discovery so little encouraging that it is likely to put to flight the warmest passion. You are making destiny for yourself instead of letting it make you. How strangely we two are being twirled about! Much philosophy and little love is your drift; much love and no philosophy is mine. The Julie of Jean-Jacques, whom I was thinking a dreadful pedant, is a mere ignoramus compared to you. Virtue of womanhood! why, you've measured life from top to toe !

Alas! I am laughing at you, and perhaps you are right. You have immolated your youth in a single day, and you'll have the vices of age before your time. I

dare say your Louis will be happy. If he loves you, and I don't doubt he does. - he may never find out that you have behaved in the interests of your family, just as we are told courtesans behave in the interests of their own fortunes; they make men happy, - at least it seems so by the way men go on. A clear-sighted husband would, of course, always continue to love you; but won't he dispense with gratitude to a woman who makes deception a sort of moral corset, as necessary to her life as an ordinary corset to her body?

My dearest, love is to my eyes the principle of all virtues gathered into that image of the Divine. Love, like all principles, cannot be estimated and measured; it is the infinite of our souls. Have n't you been trying to justify to yourself the dreadful position of a girl married to a man she can only esteem? Duty, that's your rule and measure; but to do your duty from necessity is the morality of atheists; to do it from love, from sentiment, that is the secret law of womanhood. You have made yourself the man, and your Louis will soon find himself the woman.

Oh! my dear Renée, your letter has plunged me into endless meditation. I see plainly that a convent can never take the place of a mother to girls. entreat you, my noble angel with the black eyes, so pure and proud, so grave, so elegant, think over these first outcries your letter has wrung from me. I am try-

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ing to console myself with the thought that at this very moment, while I am lamenting, love may have knocked over all your sage scaffoldings. Well, I might do worse without reasoning, without calculating; passion is an element which may have a logic as cruel as yours.

Monday. '

Last night, before going to bed, I sat down at my window to look at the sky, which was sublimely pure. The stars were like silver nails holding up the azure veil. In the silence of the night I could hear the sound of breathing, and by the half-light from the heavens I saw my Spaniard, perched like a squirrel in the branches of a tree on the boulevard, contemplating, no doubt, my windows. The first effect of this discovery was to drive me into the farther corner of my room, with my hands and feet almost paralyzed; but deep below that first sensation of fear, I felt a joy ineffable.

Not one of those clever Frenchmen who want to marry me would think of clambering into an elm at the risk of being seized by the watchman. My Spaniard had probably been there a good long time. Ah! he does not choose to give me any more lessons, but he needs one himself; and he shall have it! If he only knew what I have said to myself about his apparent ugliness! I assure you, Renée, I've been philosophizing, too. It occurred to me that there was something

dreadful in loving handsome men. Is n't it admitting that the senses count for three fourths of love, which ought to be wholly divine?

So, when I got a little over my first fright, I put my head out again to see if he were still there, and I was well punished for it. With some sort of tube he fired a letter artistically rolled up in a leaden ball through the window. "Good heavens!" I thought, "can he suppose I left my window open for that? But if I shut it suddenly I shall seem to admit it." So I did better; I went back to the window as if I had not heard the noise of his note falling, and as if I had seen nothing. Then I said aloud, "Do come here, Griffith, and look at the stars," — Griffith being sound asleep, like a true old maid as she is.

When the Moor heard me he glided down with the rapidity of a shadow. He must have been half-dead with fright, like myself, for I did not hear him walk away, and I dare say he stayed crouching at the foot of the elm. After a good quarter of an hour, during which time I bathed in the blue of heaven and floundered in the ocean of curiosity, I closed my window and jumped into bed to unroll my note with all the care they give to the papyri in Naples. My fingers touched fire. "What horrible power is this that man exercises over me?" I said to myself, and I put the paper to a candle thinking to burn it; then a thought

restrained me. What could he have to say to me secretly? However, my dear, I did burn his letter unread, thinking that if all the other girls in the universe would have devoured it, I, Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu could not and would not do so.

The next night, at the Italiens, there he was at his post! But, constitutional minister that he once was, I am certain he did not detect by any movement or attitude of mine the agitation in my soul; I behaved precisely as if nothing had happened the night before. I was satisfied with myself; but I must say he looked rather sad. Poor man! it is so natural in Spain to make love through the windows. During the acts he walked about the corridor. The secretary of the Spanish legation saw him there and told me an act of his that is really sublime. Being Duc de Soria he was to have married one of the richest heiresses of Spain, the young Princess Marie Heredia, whose fortune would have lessened the trials of his exile. But it seems that contrary to the will of their parents, who had betrothed them in childhood, Marie loved the younger brother; and my Felipe gave her up to him, and allowed the king of Spain to take his own rank and fortune away from him and give them to this brother.

I said to the young secretary, "He probably did it in the simplest manner."

"Then you know him?" he said naïvely. My mother smiled.

- "What will become of him now?" I asked. "I am told he is condemned to death."
- "Yes, in Spain; but he can live in Sardinia. The King of Sardinia granted him a passport as Baron de Macumer, though not without making some difficulty," added the young diplomat. "But he is really a Sardinian subject. He has magnificent feudal estates on the island, with power of life and death. He has a palace at Sassari. If Ferdinand VII. dies, Macumer will enter diplomacy, and the court of Turin will give him an embassy. Though young —"
 - "Young? is he young?" I said.
- "Yes, Mademoiselle; though young, he is one of the most distinguished men in Spain."

I was turning my opera-glass round the theatre as the secretary spoke, and seemed to be paying him very little attention; but, between ourselves, I was in despair at having burned that letter. I wonder how such a man expresses himself when he loves — and he does love me. To be loved, adored in secret! to have in this audience, made up of all the greatest men in Paris, a man, a great man, of my own, and no one to know it! Oh, Renée, I began to see the use of balls and parties, and to feel that other people are necessary to one's love, if only to sacrifice them all to the beloved. I felt a new and happy being within me. All my vanities, my self-love, my pride were being stroked. God knows what sort of a glance I cast about me.

"Ah! you sly puss!" whispered my mother, smiling.

Yes, my very shrewd mother detected a secret joy in my behavior; I was forced to lower my flag to that astute woman. Those four words of hers taught me more of the science of the world than I have learned in a year — for here it is March. Alas! the Italian opera will be over in a month. What will become of me without that divine music if my heart is full of love?

My dear, when I went home I opened my window, with the resolution of a Chaulieu, to look at a heavy shower. Oh! if men only knew the powerful seduction they exercise over us by heroic deeds what great things they would do; even cowards would be heroes. What I had just heard of my Spaniard had put me into a fever. I was certain he was there — waiting to throw me another letter. This time I did not burn it. I read it.

Here, Madame philosopher, is the first love-letter I ever received; now we have each had one:—

Louise, I do not love you because of your sublime beauty; I do not love you because of your broad mind; the nobility of your sentiments, the infinite grace you impart to all things; nor yet because of your pride, your regal disdain for all that is not within your sphere, — a disdain which does not, in you, exclude kindness, for your charity is that of the angels. Louise, I love you because you have stooped from those proud grandeurs to comfort a poor exile; with a glance, a gesture, you have consoled a man for being so far beneath

you that he could ask nothing but your pity, your generous pity. You are the only woman in the world who has ever softened for me the hard indifference of her eyes; and since that beneficent glance fell upon me — on me but a grain of dust — and I obtained that which I never had in my days of power and grandeur, I have longed to tell you, Louise, how dear you are to me, and that I love you for yourself without one ulterior thought; in this I go far beyond the conditions you yourself have given to a perfect love.

Learn, then, idol placed by me in highest heaven, that there is in this world a last descendant of the Saracens whose life belongs to you; from whom you can ask all as from a slave; who will be honored in his own eyes by doing your bidding. I have given myself to you forever, — solely for the joy of giving that self in return for one glance, one motion of your hand stretched out one morning to your Spanish teacher. You have a servant, Louise, and nothing else. No, I dare not think that I can ever be loved; but perhaps you will endure my presence because of my devotion.

Since that morning when you smiled to me, as a noble maiden divining the wretchedness of my solitary and betrayed heart, I have enthroned you; you are the sovereign mistress of my life, the queen of my thoughts, the divinity of my soul, the light that shines within me, the flower of my flowers, the fragrance of the air I breathe, the richness of my blood, the softness of my slumber. A single thought troubles this happiness. You are still ignorant that you have beside you a limitless devotion, a faithful heart, a blind slave, a mute servant, a fortune, — for I am now but the depositary of all that I possess; all is yours. You do not know that you own a heart to which you can trust all;

the heart of a parent from whom you can ask all, to whom you may look by right for protection; the heart of a friend, the heart of a brother. All the true sentiments of such hearts are lacking to your life; I see that. I have detected the secret of your home, your isolation!

My boldness comes from my desire to let you see the extent of your possessions. Accept all, Louise; in so doing you will give me the only life there is for me in this world, — that of absolute devotion. In placing the badge of servitude around my neck you risk nothing. I will never ask anything from you but the happiness of knowing myself yours. Do not even tell me that you cannot love me; it must be so, — I whow that. I know that I must love from afar, without hope and for my love's sake only.

I would fain know whether you consent to accept me as your servant, and I have sought for some means to make this known to me which shall not infringe upon your dignity. Will you answer me to-morrow evening at the opera-house by holding in your hand a white and a red camellia, — the image of a man's blood at the orders of a purity he adores; that shall be my answer. At all times, ten years hence, as to-morrow, whatever you wish that is possible for a man to do, shall be done when you ask it of

Your happy servant,

FELIPE HENAREZ.

My dear, please admit that the great seigneurs know how to love. He bounds like an African lion! What restrained ardor, what faith, what sincerity, what grandeur of soul in his humility! I felt very small, and I asked myself in a bewildered way, "What's to be done?"

It is the privilege of a great man to upset all ordinary calculations. He is sublime and touching and artless and gigantic. In one single letter he has gone far beyond all those of Lovelace, and Saint-Preux as well. Oh, here's true love! — no shams or trickery here! Love is or is not; and when it is, it appears in all its immensity.

So here I am, compelled to lay aside my coquetry. Refuse, or accept! I am held between those two terms without a pretext to shelter irresolution. All discussion is denied. It is not Paris, it is Spain, it is the East, — yes, it is the Saracen who speaks, who kneels before the Catholic Eve and offers her his scimitar, his horse, his head. Shall I accept this Moorish relic?

Read and reread that Saracenically Spanish letter, my Renée, and you'll see that true love is worth more than all the Judaic stipulations of your philosophy. Renée! Renée your letter weighs on my heart; you've commonplaced all life for me. Why should I mind you? Why should I play any such part as you advise? Am I not eternally mistress of this lion who subdues his roars to worshipping sighs? Oh! but how much he must have roared all to himself in his den in the rue Hillerin-Bertin! I know where he lives, I have his card: F. BARON DE MACUMER.

Well, he has deprived me of all chance of arguing the matter; there is nothing I can do but fling those camellias at his head. What infernal cleverness love, pure, true, artless love, possesses! It seems the noblest thing on earth to the heart of a poor woman helplessly reduced to simple and easy action. Oh, the East! I've read the Arabian Nights and this is the very essence of it: two flowers, and all is said! We've done fourteen volumes of Clarissa Harlowe with a single posy! I twist and twirl before that letter, like a bit of twine in the fire. To take or not to take those two camellias? Yes, or no; kill, or make alive!

A voice cries to me, "Test him!" — yes, I'll test him.

XVI.

SAME TO SAME.

I am dressed — in white, with white camellias in my hair and a white camellia in my hand; my mother carries red ones, and I can take one from her if I want to. I have a desperate desire to sell him his red camellia at the price of some agony. I shall hesitate; in fact, I really sha'n't decide till I am on the ground.

I am lovely. Griffith begged me to let her look at me for a few minutes. The solemnity of this occasion, the drama of this consent, has brought the color into my cheeks. I've two red camellias there side by side with the white ones.

One o'clock.

I was much admired; but one man adored me. He dropped his head on his breast when he saw the white camellia in my hand; but I saw him turn as white as the flower itself when I took a red camellia from my mother's bunch. To come with the two flowers might have been accidental, but the action of taking one was an answer; it was even beyond what was asked of me. The opera was "Romeo and Juliet;" but as you don't know what the duet between the two lovers is, you can't understand the happiness of two neophytes of love as they listened to that divine expression of tenderness.

I've gone to bed listening to steps pacing the sidewalk of the boulevard. Oh! my dear angel, fire is in my heart, in my head. What is he doing? what is he thinking? Has he thoughts that I know nothing of? Will he really be the slave forever he talks about? How can I make sure? Can he have the slightest feeling in his heart that my acceptance lacked dignity? What is he thinking, in short? I am delivered over to the quibbling discussions of those women of "The Grand Cyrus"—to all the subtleties of the Courts of Love. Does he know that in love the slightest actions of women are the result of a world of reflections, inward struggles, lost victories? Oh, what is he thinking of at this moment? How can I reach him? how can

I order him to write me every evening the history of his day? He is my slave, and I can make him do what I choose. Yes, I'll overwhelm him with work.

Sunday morning.

I could not sleep till morning. It is now twelve o'clock and I have made Griffith write the following letter:—

To Monsieur le Baron de Macumer:

Mademoiselle de Chaulieu desires me, Monsieur le baron, to request that you will return to me the copy of a letter, written to her by one of her friends and copied in her handwriting, which you have carried away with you.

Receive, etc.

S. GRIFFITH.

My dear, Griffith departed to the rue Hillerin-Bertin; she gave her missive to my slave, who returned my epistle in an envelope; it was stained with tears! Oh! my dear, he must have cared for it; but he obeyed me. Any other man would have refused, and written me a charming letter full of flatteries. But the Saracen did what he promised to do, — he obeyed; I cried about it.

XVII.

SAME TO SAME.

April 2.

YESTERDAY the weather was superb; I dressed myself like a girl beloved who wants to please. My father has given me, at my request, the prettiest little equipage you can imagine, — dapple-gray horses and a calèche of the utmost elegance. I tried it to-day for the first time. I must say I looked like a flower under a parasol lined with white silk.

As I drove up the Avenue des Champs-Élysées I saw my Abencerrage riding toward me on a horse of wonderful beauty. The men (who nowadays make themselves look like grooms) all stopped to look at him. He bowed to me, and I made him a little sign of encouragement; he slackened his pace beside the carriage so that I was able to say:—

"I hope you were not annoyed, Monsieur le baron, that I asked for that letter? It must be useless to you, for," I added in a low voice, "you have gone beyond its programme. You have a horse there which makes you very conspicuous." "My bailiff in Sardinia sent him to me," he replied. "The horse has an Arabian pedigree, and was raised on my estate."

This morning, my dear, Macumer rode an English

horse, a chestnut, very handsome though it did not excite the same attention. My few words of sarcasm had sufficed. The Duc d'Angoulême has bought the Arabian. My slave saw that he was stepping out of the simplicity I required by drawing the attention of the crowd upon him. A man should be remarked for himself, and never for his horse or the things about him. To ride too showy a horse seems to me as ridiculous as to wear a great diamond in one's shirt. I was delighted to catch him in a fault, — though perhaps a little vanity might be permitted to a poor exile.

All this nonsense pleases me. Oh! my dear old philosopher, do please enjoy my loves in return for the long faces I pull over your gloomy reasonings. Dear Philip the Second in petticoats, sit here beside me in my pretty carriage; do you see the velvet glance, humble, but intense, proud of its servitude, which a man with a red camellia (my livery) casts upon me as he passes? What a light love casts! How clear are all things to me now! How well I read my Paris! I see the wit and wisdom of it now! Yes, love is sweeter, grander, more charming here than elsewhere. I know now that I could never, never torment a fool nor gain the slightest empire over one. It takes a brilliant man to understand us, and on no other can we play as on an instrument. Oh! poor friend, I forgot! forgive me, there's your l'Estorade; but then, did n't you tell me

you were going to make a genius of him? Ah, I begin to see why! you are bringing him up on a bottle to make him brilliant enough to understand you some day. Adieu, adieu; I'm silly, so I won't continue.

XVIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

DEAR ANGEL, — Though I ought to say dear demon, — you have grieved me without intending it; if we were not one and the same soul I should say you had wounded me; but we can't wound ourselves, you know.

How plainly I see that you have never once let your thoughts rest seriously on that word indissoluble, applied to the contract which binds a woman to a man. I don't wish to contradict philosophers and legislators; they are fully able to contradict themselves; but, dearest, this I must say: by rendering marriage irrevocable and by imposing on all an identical and pitiless rule, they have made of each union a thing by itself absolutely dissimilar from other unions, as dissimilar as individuals are among themselves. Each has its different internal laws; country married life, where two beings are forced to live perpetually in each other's presence, is not the same as city married life, which

distractions color. A household in Paris, where life rushes on like a torrent, cannot be the same as a home in the provinces, where life is less agitated. If conditions vary with places, how much more do they vary according to natures. The wife of a man of genius has only to let him guide her, while the wife of a fool must take the reins and feel herself the more intelligent of the two, under pain of incurring great misfortunes. Perhaps, after all, reason and reflection do lead to what is called vitiation — if vitiation, for us, is the introduction of calculation into feelings. A passion which reasons is vitiated; it is beautiful only when spontaneous, involuntary, in one of those fine gushes of feeling which exclude all egotism.

Ah! sooner or later, my dearest, you will say to yourself: "Yes, deception is as necessary to a woman as her corset, if by deception is meant the silence of her who has the courage to hold her tongue, if by deception is meant the wise calculation of the future. All married women learn to their cost that social laws are incompatible in many points with the laws of nature. We might have a dozen children by marrying as young as we are now; and if we had them it would be a crime: we should bring into the world twelve sorrows; we should deliver over twelve sweet beings to poverty and despair, — whereas two children are two happinesses, two benefits, two creations in har-

mony with the manners, customs, and laws of the present time. Natural law and the Code are antagonistic, and we women are the ground on which they fight. Do you apply the word calculation to the wisdom of a wife who feels bound to watch that the family is not ruined through her? That is a calculation which you will see for yourself some day, Baronne de Macumer, when you are the proud and happy wife of the man who adores you. Or rather, that superior man will save you the calculation by making it for you.

You see, my dear, heedless one, that I have studied the Code in its relations to conjugal love on behalf of both of us. You will some day know that we must give account to none but ourselves and God of the means we employ to perpetuate happiness in the bosom of our homes. Better the judgment and the calculation exercised in that than unreflecting love which ends in weariness, in estrangement, in disunion. Ah! my dear, we have many sublime lies to act in order to be the noble creatures we should be in fulfilling our duty.

You tax me with calculation, that is, with duplicity, because I hold myself in reserve with Louis; but may not too intimate and familiar a knowledge be the cause of disunion? I do try to occupy him much in order to distract him from me, and I do it for his own happiness; that is surely not an evil calculation. If ten-

derness is inexhaustible, the passion of love is not; and it is, believe me, Louise, a true enterprise for an honest woman to wisely distribute it over the whole of life.

At the risk of seeming execrable to you, I must tell you that I persist in my principles, and think them very grand and very generous. Virtue, my darling, is a principle which shows itself differently according to its surroundings; the virtue of Provence, and that of Constantinople, and of London, and of Paris, have totally dissimilar appearances without ceasing to be virtue. The fabric of every human life is woven of threads unlike those of its neighbors, though seen at a certain height they all look alike. If I wished to see Louis unhappy, and bring about an eventual separation both of body and mind, I should cease to maintain my own being, and should put myself at his bidding. I have not had, like you, the happiness of meeting with a superior man, but perhaps I may have the pleasure of making him one. Yes, I'll give you a rendezvous five years hence in Paris, and then perhaps you will tell me that I was mistaken, and that Louis de l'Estorade was always a remarkable man.

As for these glories of love, these great emotions which I feel only through you, as for those nocturnal perches in elm-trees by moonlight, with all their accompanying adoration and worship, I knew I must renounce all that. Yes, my Louise, your blooming into

life is to be what you choose to make it; mine is circumscribed, it is bounded by La Crampade; and yet you reproach me for the precautions which my poor little, fragile happiness requires in order to be rich and lasting and sacred! I wish to put the graces of love into wifehood, and you have almost made me blush for myself. Which of us two is right, which wrong? Perhaps we are both right and both wrong; perhaps society sells our laces and our titles and our children very dear to us.

I too, have my red camellias; they are on my lips, they blossom in smiles for the two beings, father and son, to whom I am devoted, slave and mistress both. But oh! my dearest, your last letters have made me feel what I have lost. They have taught me the extent of the sacrifices of a married woman. I had never seriously looked at that broad, free, beautiful expanse in which you are now bounding, and I don't deny that a tear or two came into my eyes as I read your account of it. But a little regret doesn't mean a change of opinion, though it may be cousin-german to it! You say marriage has made me a philosopher. Alas! no; I felt this when those tears came as I read of you, swept onward in a torrent of love. But my father made me read one of the most profound writers of our time, the man who has inherited Bossuet's mantle, - a stern teacher, whose pages compel conviction. While

you have been reading "Corinne," I have been reading Bonald, and there's the whole secret of my philosophy; the Family, sacred and strong, has appeared like a vision before me. I swear by Bonald that your father was right in what he preached to you.

Adieu, my dear imagination, my friend, you who are my romance, my ecstasy!

XIX.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

You are a love of a woman, my Renée; and now I'll agree that it is fair and honest to be deceitful and calculating; will that satisfy you? Besides, the man who loves us belongs to us,—we have the right to make him a fool or a man of genius; between ourselves, we generally make a fool of him. You are going to make yours a man of genius, and conceal how you do it; two magnificent performances! Ah, if there were no paradise you'd be well caught; for you are devoting yourself to voluntary martyrdom. You are trying to render your man ambitious, and to keep him loving. Child that you are! is n't it enough for you to keep him loving? How far is calculation virtue, or is virtue calculation, hey? Well, we won't quarrel over that question; as Bonald is living we can refer it to him. We

are, and we intend to be, virtuous, but oh, Renée, at this moment I think that in spite of your philosophical rascality, you are better than I.

Yes, I'm a horribly deceitful girl; I love Felipe, and I hide it from him with infamous dissimulation. I'd give anything to see him jump from that tree to the top of the wall, and from the wall to my balcony; and if he did, I should annihilate him with my disdain. You see how terribly truthful I can be. What stops me from being as true to him? What power hinders me from telling that dear Felipe the happiness his love—his pure, entire, lofty, secret, overflowing love—has poured in floods into my heart?

Madame de Mirbel is painting a miniature of me; when finished, I mean to give it to him, my dear.

A thing that surprises me every day, more and more, is the activity which love brings into life. What interest there is in every hour, every action, in the least little things! and what a delightful jumbling of past and future in the present! We live in all three tenses of the verb. Will this last always? Oh! answer me; tell me what happiness is; does it calm, or irritate? I am filled with a mortal uneasiness; I don't know how to behave; I feel, in my heart, a power which is dragging me toward him, in spite of reason and all social conventions. The contentment Felipe shows in being mine, his love at a distance, his obedi-

ence irritate me, just as his profound respect irritated when he was only my Spanish teacher. I feel inclined to cry out as he rides past me: "Idiot! if you love the mere outside of me, what would it be if you knew me truly?"

Oh! Renée, I hope you burn my letters! I'll burn all yours. If other eyes than our own should read these thoughts that go from my heart to yours, I'd send Felipe to tear them out,— or kill their owners for better safety.

Monday.

Ah! Renée, how can we sound a man's heart? My father is to bring your Vicomte de Bonald to the house and present him to me, and I'll ask him that question; if he is so wise he certainly can answer it. God is fortunate in being able to read all hearts. Am I still an angel to that man? That's the whole question.

If ever, in look, or gesture, or tone of a word, I perceived the slightest diminution of the respect he felt for me when he was my teacher of languages, I feel I have the strength to throw the whole thing over and forget him. "Why these grand words, these mighty resolutions?" I hear you say. Ah! that's just it, my dear; something has happened.

My charming father, who behaves to me exactly like an old *cavaliere servente* to an Italian woman, has had, as I told you, my portrait painted by Madame de Mirbel. I managed, however, to have a good copy made for the duke, and I sent the original to Felipe. The miniature went yesterday, together with these few words:—

"Don Felipe, your absolute devotion is accepted in blind confidence. Time will show whether this is not attributing too much nobility to a man."

The gift was great; it looks like a promise and, oh horrors! an invitation; but, what you will think worse still, I wanted it to express a promise and an invitation without going so far as to give them. If in his answer there is a single "my Louise" or even "Louise," he is lost.

Tuesday.

No! he's not lost. This Spanish grandee of mine is an adorable lover. Here is his letter:—

- "Every moment that I pass without seeing you is nevertheless filled with you. I close my eyes to all things else and fasten them in meditation on your image. For all time they will rest upon that marvellous ivory that talisman, I should say where your blue eyes speak, and art becomes reality. The delay of this letter is caused by my enjoyment of that contemplation in which I said to you all that I must here restrain.
- "Yes, since yesterday, alone with you, I have yielded myself up, for the first time in my life, to complete, entire, infinite happiness. If you could see where I have placed you between the Virgin and God you would understand

the emotions in which I have passed the night. But I will not tell them to you lest I offend you; it would be torture to me to receive one glance devoid of that angelic kindness which is now my life.

"If—if, queen of my heart and life, you would deign to grant me a thousandth part of the love I feel for you! The if of that constant prayer plays havoc with my soul. I am torn between belief and fear, between life and death, between light and darkness.

"A criminal is not more agitated while the verdict is deliberated than I am while I write these words. The smile upon your lips, to which I look at every moment, alone can calm the fear I feel of displeasing you. Since I came into the world, no one, not even my mother, has ever smiled upon The beautiful young girl who was destined to be my wife repulsed my heart and loved my brother. My efforts as a statesman were defeated. I saw in the eyes of my king only hatred and a desire for vengeance. We were enemies from our youth up; he considered as a mortal insult to himself, the vote by which the Cortes raised me to power. However strong a soul may be, doubt will at least enter it. Besides, I know myself; I know the ill grace of my appearance; I feel how difficult it is to estimate a heart through such a covering. To be loved, - it had passed into a dream before I met you. When I attached myself to you I knew that devotion, the devotion that expects nothing, could alone excuse me.

"As I contemplate your portrait, as I drink in that smile so full of divine promises, a hope that I will not listen to shines upon my soul. The light of dawn is struggling with the night of doubt. I fear to offend you by suffering it to break.

"No, you cannot love me yet, I feel it. But, little by little, as you learn the power, the duration, the extent of my unspeakable affection, you will grant it a little place in your life. If my ambition offends you, tell me so without anger, and I will drive it back into my heart. But if you will try to love me do not let me know of it unless you are certain; for the happiness of my whole life lies in serving you — you only."

My dear, in reading those last words I thought I saw him as pale as he was that night when, by taking the camellias, I showed that I accepted his devotion. I read in these submissive phrases something other than the flowers of rhetoric which every lover uses, and I felt a great commotion in myself, — I breathed the breath of happiness.

The weather is shocking; it is impossible to drive out without giving rise to suspicion; even my mother, who often goes out in the rain, has had to stay at home.

Wednesday evening.

I have just seen him at the Opera. My dear, he is no longer the same man. He came to our box with the Spanish ambassador, who presented him. After looking in my eyes and seeing that his audacity did not displease me, he seemed not to know what to do with his arms and legs, and he called Madame d'Espard "mademoiselle." But his eyes flashed a brighter light than

that of the chandeliers. At last he went away, as if he feared to commit some folly.

- "The Baron de Macumer is in love," said Madame de Maufrigneuse to my mother.
- "That would be strange in a fallen minister," replied my mother.

I had the strength to look at Madame d'Espard, Madame de Maufrigneuse, and my mother with the curiosity of a person who does not understand a foreign language and is trying to guess what is being said; but inwardly I was grasped by a passionate joy, in which, it seemed to me, my soul was bathing. There is but one word to express what I feel, — rapture. Felipe loves so truly that I think him worthy to be loved. I am the principle of his life, and I hold in my hand the thread that guides his thought. And now (as you and I must tell the whole truth to each other) I feel a violent desire to have him surmount all barriers to reach me and demand of me to be his. I want this in order that I may know whether his passionate love could be calmed and humbled by a look.

Ah! my dear, I stop, trembling. I hear a step, a noise without. Yes, from my window I can see him on the wall, risking his life.

I made but one sign; he sprang from the wall, which is ten feet high, and ran down the road to a spot where I could see him, as if to show me he was not hurt.

This care for my feelings, when he must have been quite giddy from his fall, touched me so much that I am crying, though I don't know why. Poor ugly man! why was he there? What did he want to say to me?

I dare not write any more of my thoughts. I will go to bed and dream of joy, and of all that you and I would say to each other were we together. Adieu, dear silent one. I have no time now to scold you for your silence, but it is a whole month since I heard from you. What has happened in the mean time?

XX.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

May.

If love is the life of the world, why have stern philosophers suppressed it in marriage? Why does society make it a law to sacrifice the Woman to the Family, creating thus a secret struggle in the bosom of marriage,—'a struggle which society foresaw as so dangerous that it has invented powers with which to arm the man against us. I see in marriage two opposing forces which legislators ought to have united. Can they be united? that is the question I ask myself as I read your letters. Ah! dearest, a single one of those letters is

enough to ruin the edifice built up with so much care by my great writer, — an edifice in which I was sheltering myself with quiet satisfaction!

The laws were made by old men, and women know it. They have sagely decreed that conjugal love exempt from passion does not degrade us, and that a woman ought to give herself without love when the law permits a man to make her his. Concerned only for the Family. they have imitated Nature, whose sole purpose is to perpetuate the species. I was a being formerly, I am now a thing! More than one tear have I shed in secret. Louise, how is it that our destinies are so unlike? With you, love will enlarge your soul, your virtue will lie in passion; your duty, if you marry Felipe, will be the sweetest, the most expansive of all sentiments. Where lies the meaning of this difference in our fates? Our future is big with the answer; I await it with feverish curiosity. You love, you are adored; oh! dearest, give yourself wholly to that beautiful poem we studied so much. The beauty of woman, so delicate, so spiritualized in you, was surely given by God that she might charm and please, - that must be His design.

Nevertheless, my dearest, keep back the secret of your tenderness; subject Felipe to those subtle tests we so often talked of, and learn if he is worthy of you. Above all, ask yourself if you love him even more than

he loves you. Louise, you are still free; do not risk the dangerous bargain of an irrevocable marriage without security, I implore you. Sometimes a gesture, a word, a look in a conversation without witnesses, when souls are off their guard and stripped of worldly hypocrisies, reveal great precipices.

You do not know with what anxiety I think of you. In spite of distance I see you, I hear you, I feel all that you are feeling. Do not fail to write to me and tell me all; omit nothing. Your letters bring passionate emotions to my simple, tranquil life, unvaried as a high-road. The most that happens here, my dearest, is a sort of game that I play with myself, passing alternately from discouragement to hope; but I will write of this later. Perhaps I have asked more happiness of life than life can give. I suppose we must when young be always trying to make the real and the ideal harmonize. My reflections, and at this moment I am making them in solitude, sitting under the shadow of a rock in my park, have brought me to think that love in marriage is an accident, on which it is impossible to base a law which could or should rule all. My philosopher of the Aveyron, Bonald, has good reason to consider the Family the only possible social unity, and to make woman subject to it, as she has been through all The solution of this great question, terrible for us, lies, I believe, in our first child. For this reason,

I desire to be a mother, — if only to give food to the craving activity of my soul.

Louis is always most adorably kind; his love is active, and my tenderness is abstract; he is happy; he gathers his flowers, and pays no heed to the earth that produces them. Happy egotism! No matter what it costs me, I lend myself to all his illusions, just as a mother (according to my ideas of motherhood) wearies herself to give pleasure to her child. In fact, the little familiar name by which I call him in our home is "my child." I await the fruit of all my sacrifices, which are a secret between God and you and me. Maternity is an enterprise in which I have opened an enormous credit; it owes me so much that I fear it can never pay me in full; it is charged with developing my energy, enlarging my heart, and compensating me for all things by illimitable joys. Oh! my God, grant I be not defrauded! there lies all my future, and - oh, terrifying thought! - my virtue.

XXI.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

June.

MY DEAR MARRIED DARLING, — Your letter came just in time to justify me to myself for a daring per-

formance on which I have been thinking night and day. I certainly have a craving for unknown, or, if you choose to say so, forbidden things, which makes me rather uneasy, for it is the sign of a war going on within me between the laws of the world and those of nature. I don't know if nature in me is stronger than society, but I often catch myself making compromises between those two powers.

Well, to speak plainly, I wanted to talk with Felipe, alone, at night, under the lindens in the garden. Most assuredly that wish makes me deserve the name of "sly puss" the duchess bestowed upon me. Nevertheless, I think it a very prudent and wise proceeding. While rewarding the many nights he has spent at the foot of my wall, I should be able to find out what Felipe thought of my proceeding, and that would give me a clue to judge him by. If he worships that wrong proceeding at a respectful distance, he shall be my husband; if he is not even more respectful and trembling than when he bows to me on horseback in the Champs-Elysées, I will never see him again.

As for the world, I risk less in seeing my lover in this way than by smiling on him in the salons of Madame de Maufrigneuse or Madame de Beauséant, where we are surrounded by spies; for God knows how they would watch a girl suspected of noticing a man like Macumer. But oh! if you only knew how

agitated I was in my own mind while I imagined this scheme, and tried to think of some way to carry it out. I did so regret you were not here; we might have talked it over for hours, lost in a labyrinth of uncertainty, and fancying all sorts of things in a first interview, alone, by night, in shade and silence, beneath the lindens silvered with such a moon!—oh, think of it! But I had to tremble and palpitate all alone, saying to myself, "Oh! Renée, where are you?" So when your letter came, it fired the powder and my last scruples were blown up. I threw my adorer a little note containing a key to the garden gate and these words:—

"It is desirable to prevent you from committing further follies. By breaking your neck you will injure the reputation of the person you say you love. Are you worthy of another proof of esteem? Do you deserve to be spoken to to-morrow night, at the hour when the moon casts the shadow of the lindens on the garden?"

Last night, just as Griffith was going to bed, I said to her:—

"Take a shawl and come with me, my dear; I am going to the end of the garden, and want no one to know it."

She did n't say a word, but followed me.

What sensations, oh, my Renée! After waiting a little while in a sort of charming agony, I saw him,

gliding along like a shadow. When I had crossed the garden without disaster I said to Griffith: -

- "Don't be surprised. The Baron de Macumer is here, and that is the reason why I have brought you with me." She did n't say a word.
- "What do you wish of me?" said Felipe, in a voice that sounded as though he were beside himself.
- "I wish to say to you that which I cannot write," I replied.

Griffith walked a few steps away. The night was one of those balmy nights fragrant with flowers. At that moment I felt an intoxicating pleasure in being alone with him in the soft twilight of the lindens. beyond which the garden and the house shone white in the moonlight. This contrast seemed a vague image of our love, about to pass from mystery to the dazzling publicity of marriage. After an instant given to the pleasure of the situation I said: -

"Though I am not afraid of calumny, I do not wish you to climb into that tree again," pointing to the elm. "nor on that wall. We have played school-girl and school-boy long enough; let us lift our actions to the level of our positions. If you had killed yourself when you jumped I should have been dishonored."

I looked at him; he was white as a sheet.

"And if you were detected here," I went on, "either my mother or I would be suspected."

- "Forgive me!" he said, in a feeble voice.
- "You may pass along the boulevard," I added; "I shall hear your step, and if I wish to see you I will open my window. But I shall not allow you to incur, or incur myself, that danger unless there is some strong reason for it. Why have you forced me, by your imprudence, to commit an imprudence myself, and risk giving you a bad opinion of me?"

I saw the tears in his eyes, and I felt they were the finest answer in the world.

"You must know," I said, smiling, "that my present act is excessively rash."

After one or two turns in silence under the trees he seemed to recover speech.

- "You must think me stupid," he said; "but I am so drunk with happiness that I have neither strength nor mind. But be sure of this: you sanctify all actions, to my eyes, by the mere fact that you do them. The respect I have for you is only second to that I feel to God. Besides, Miss Griffith is here."
- "She is here for others, but not for us, Felipe," I said hastily.

My dear, he understood me!

"I know," he said, giving me a most humble look, "that whether she were here or not, all would be between us as though she saw us. If we are not in presence of men, we are in presence of God, and our own self-respect is more to us than that of the world."

"Thank you, Felipe," I said, giving him my hand with a gesture you ought to have seen. "A woman, and I am a woman, is always inclined to love a man who understands her — oh! only inclined," I added; "I don't wish you to feel more hope than I am willing to give. My heart will belong only to the man who knows how to read it and comprehend it. Our sentiments, without being absolutely alike, ought to turn in the same direction and be at an equal height. I do not want to boast of myself; for certain good qualities that I think I have may be partly faults; but, such as they are, if I did not have them I should be wretched."

- "After having accepted me as, your servant, you permitted me to love you," he said trembling, and looking at me as he said each word; "I have more than I originally asked for."
- "Well," I said quickly, "your lot is better than mine. I should not be sorry to exchange, but that is your affair."
- "It is my turn now to thank you," he said. "I know the duty of a loyal lover. I must prove to you that I am worthy of you, and you have the right to test me as long as you please. You may yes, you shall reject me if I betray your trust."
- "I know you love me," I answered. "Up to this time" (and I emphazied the words cruelly) "I like no one better; that is why you are here now."

We then walked up and down, talking together; and I must admit that my Spaniard when at his ease displayed true eloquence of heart as he expressed to me, not his passion, but his tenderness; he explained his feelings by an adorable comparison with the love of the divine. His vibrating voice, which gives a peculiar value to his ideas, in themselves so delicate, was like the notes of a nightingale. He spoke low in the middle tones of his delicious organ, and his sentences came rapidly like an effervescence; his heart overflowed in them.

"Enough," I said, "or I shall stay here longer than I ought."

With a gesture I dismissed him.

"So you have engaged yourself, Mademoiselle," said Griffith.

"Perhaps so if it were in England, but not in France," I answered, carelessly. "I wish to make a love-marriage, and not to be mistaken, that's all."

You see, my dear, love did n't come to me; I behaved like Mahomet with his mountain.

Friday.

I have seen my slave again. He has grown timid; he has a mysterious, worshipful air which I like; he seems to have a deep sense of my glory and power. But nothing in his looks or manner will give the gossips of society the slightest suspicion of the infinite love that my eyes can see in him.

And yet, my dear, I am not carried away, mastered, subjugated; on the contrary, I master, I subjugate. In short, I reason. Ah! I wish I could get back that fear I felt when the teacher fascinated me. There must be two loves: the one that commands, and the one that obeys. They are distinct, and they give birth to two passions; and one is not the other. Perhaps a woman ought to know both to square her account with life. Do these two passions unite? Can a man in whom we inspire love inspire us with love in return? Felipe some day be my master? Shall I tremble before him as he trembles before me? These questions make me shudder. He is very blind. If I'd been he, I should have seen that Mademoiselle de Chaulieu under those lindens was coquettishly cold, starched, and calculating. No, this is not loving; it is only playing with fire. Felipe still pleases me, but I now find myself quite calm and at my ease. No more obstacles dreadful thought! Everything in me has flattened down; I'm afraid to question myself. He made a great mistake to hide the violence of his love; he left me mistress of myself. Yes, dear, sweet as the remembrance is of that half-hour under the trees it does not compare to the emotions I had in saving: "Shall I go, or shall I not go? Shall I write, or shall I not write?"

Is this the way it will be with all pleasures?

Would n't it be better to keep putting them off, rather than take them and enjoy them? Is hope so much better than possession? Are the rich the poor, the gainers losers? Have we, you and I, stretched feelings too much by over-developing our imagination? Sometimes that idea actually freezes me. Do you know why? I dream of going to the end of the garden without Griffith. Where should I get to then? Imagination has no limit, but satisfaction has. Dear philosopher in a corset, tell me how to reconcile these two conditions of a woman's life. One thing is certain, I cannot be satisfied with things as they are.

XXII.

LOUISE TO FELIPE.

I am not pleased with you. If you cannot weep over Racine's Bérénice, if you do not think it the most dreadful of tragedies, you do not comprehend me, and we shall never understand each other. Let us part; forget me; for if you do not respond to my feelings in essential matters I shall forget you, — or rather, you will become nothing to me, as if you had never existed.

Yesterday, at Madame d'Espard's, you assumed an air of satisfaction which supremely displeased me. You seemed so sure of being loved. Moreover the independence of your mind alarmed me. Instead of

being absorbed in your love, you were intent on making witty speeches. That's not the way with true believers; they are always humble before divinity. If I am not in your eyes a being superior to all other women, if you do not see in me the very source of your life, then I am less than a woman because only a woman.

You have roused in me a feeling of distrust, Felipe; it will out; for when I consider our past I think I have reason to be distrustful. Let me tell your Excellency, the constitutional minister of all the Spains, that I have deeply reflected on the unhappy condition of my sex. My Innocency has held torches in both hands without burning herself. Therefore listen to what my youthful experience has told me; I repeat it for your benefit:

In all other earthly things duplicity, unfaithfulness, and broken promises have judges who inflict punishments; but it is not so with love, which is forced to be victim, accuser, defender, judge, and executioner, all in one; for the worst treachery and the greatest crimes against love are secret; they are committed soul against soul without witnesses, and, moreover, it is the interest of the poor murdered ones to hold their tongue. Consequently, love has its own code, its own vengeance, with which the world has nothing to do. Now I am resolved never to forgive a crime; and there is no such thing as a peccadillo in things of the heart. Yesterday you chose to behave like a man who was sure of being

loved. It is true you would be wrong not to feel that. but you would be criminal in my eyes if it took away from you the ingenuous charm that the fluctuations of hope once gave you. I do not want to see you either timid or too self-confident; neither do I want you to fear the loss of my affection, which would be an insult to me; but I do not like the secure and airy mannner in which you are beginning to carry your love. You ought not to feel more free than I am myself. If you do not know the torture that a single thought can inflict upon the heart, tremble lest I teach it to you. With & single glance I gave my soul to you, and you read it. To you were given then the purest feelings that ever rose in the heart of a young girl. The reflections, the meditations, of which I have spoken to you came only from the head; but when the heart is wounded and asks counsel of the mind, believe me, a young girl has the prescience of an angel who knows, and can do, all.

I declare to you, Felipe, that, even if you love me as I believe you do, were you to let me suspect the least relaxation in the feelings of respect, obedience, and submission which you promised me, if I perceived any diminution in that first and beautiful love which came from your soul to mine, I should say nothing, I should not torment you with letters more or less dignified, more or less proud and angry, or merely scolding letters like this one, - no, I should say nothing, Felipe.

You would see me sad, sad unto death; but I should not die without inflicting on you the saddest of all blights; without dishonoring the memory of her whom you have loved; without planting in your heart eternal regrets, for you would see me lost here below in the eyes of men, and forever lost in the other world.

Therefore, do not make me jealous of the happy Louise, the Louise sacredly loved, the Louise whose soul expanded in a cloudless love; who possessed, in Dante's sublime language: "Senza brama, sicura ricchezza."

You put into my heart last night the cold and cruel blade of doubt. Do you understand what I mean? I distrusted you, and I have suffered so much that I long to doubt no more. If you find my service too hard, leave it; I shall not be angry.

Do I not know you are a man of intellect and wit? Reserve those flowers of your soul for me; turn a dull eye to the world, and do not put yourself in the way of receiving flattery, praises, compliments from any one. Come to me rejected and disliked, the object of calumny or contempt, tell me that women cannot comprehend you, that they ignore you, that none of them can love you; then shall you learn what there is for you in the heart and love of your Louise.

The treasures of our love must be so buried that the whole world may trample over them and not suspect them. If you had been handsome I might never have given you a thought, and sure I am I should never have

discovered in you the world of reasons that has made love blossom. Those reasons! we cannot know them, any more than we know why the sun calls forth the blossom or matures the fruit; and yet there is one that I do know, and it charms me — your noble face has its character, its language, its countenance for me alone!

Yes, I alone have the power of transforming you and of making you the most adorable of all men; and I will not have your mind escape my possession; it is not to be revealed to others, any more than your eyes, your charming mouth, your features, speak to them. To me alone the right to illumine the fires of your intellect. Remain to others the gloomy, cold, disdainful grandee of Spain you have always been. You were a savage land among whose ruins no one ventured; you were contemplated from afar; and behold, now you are making commonplace highways for all the world to enter; you will soon become an amiable Parisian!

Have you forgotten my programme? Yesterday your evident joy boasted openly that you loved me. It required the glance I gave you last night to prevent you from letting the keenest, wittiest, most satirical salon in Paris know that I inspired you. I think you too noble to have a policy in your love, but if you cannot continue to have with me the simplicity of a child I shall pity you; and yet, in spite of this first mistake you are still an object of the profound admiration of

XXIII.

FELIPE TO LOUISE.

When God sees our faults he sees also our repentance. You are right, my dear mistress. I felt that I had displeased you without being able to fathom the cause of your displeasure. You have now explained it and given me fresh cause to adore you. Your jealousy, like that of the God of Israel, fills me with happiness. Nothing is more sacred than jealousy. Oh, my beautiful guardian angel, jealousy is a sentinel that never sleeps; it is to love what physical pain is to man, a warning. Be jealous of your servant, Louise; the more you strike, the more he will kiss the rod which tells him in striking how much you care for him.

Yes, I did attempt last night to show you what I was before I loved you. People used to say in Madrid that my conversation gave them pleasure, and I wanted you to see for yourself that I had some value. Was that vanity? If so, it is well punished. Your last look left me in a state of trembling agitation I had never before experienced, — not even when the French forces appeared before Cadiz and my life was nearly sacrificed to the hypocrisy of the king.

I sought in vain for the cause of your displeasure; I was well-nigh in despair at this sudden and jarring want of harmony between our souls when I believed I was acting by your will, thinking with your thought, seeing with your eyes, enjoying your pleasure and feeling your pain, as I feel heat and cold. "Displease her!" I repeated like one beside himself. My noble and beautiful Louise, if anything could increase my devotion to you and my inalterable belief in your saintly spirit it would be the doctrine you have now put into my heart like a new light.

If these are your punishments what will be your rewards? Your mere acceptance of me as a servant was beyond my hopes. Since then I have derived from you an unhoped-for life; I am vowed to a worship; my breath is not useless; my strength has a purpose were it only that of suffering for you. I have told you, and I here repeat it, that you will always find me what I was when I offered you the duty of an humble, unassuming servant. Yes, were you even lost or dishonored, my tenderness would increase, my hand would stanch your wounds, my prayers would carry to God the assurance that you were not guilty. Have I not told you that the sentiments I bear for you in my heart are those of a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, — that I am, before all things, a family for you? I am all, or nothing - as you will.

But surely you will pardon me if sometimes I am more a lover than a father or a brother; though the father and the brother is ever behind the lover. If you could look into my heart when I see you so beautiful and radiant, so calm and so admired in your carriage on the Champs-Elysées or in your box at the opera! If you only knew how little personal pride I feel when I hear the praises drawn forth by your beauty, your bearing, and how I love the unknown persons who utter them! When by chance you have cast a flower into my soul by bowing to me, I am both humble and proud; I walk away as though God had blessed me; I return home joyous, and my joy leaves in my being a long and luminous trace; it shines in the smoke of my cigar; and I know, better than ever, that the blood which is boiling in my veins is all yours.

Do you not know how you are loved? After seeing you, I return into my study, which glows with Saracenic magnificence, but where your portrait eclipses all. I touch the spring that makes it invisible to all eyes but mine; I cast myself into the infinite of contemplation; poems of happiness come into my mind; from the heaven in which I am I see the course of my coming life, such as I never dared to hope it. Have you sometimes heard in the silence of the night, or amid the noise of your gay society, a voice resounding softly in your dear, adorable little ear? Know you not the many prayers my heart addresses to you?

So long, so often have I looked at you in silent contemplation that I have ended by discovering the reason of all your features; I see their correspondence with the perfections of your soul. That harmony of your two natures, I have put into sonnets — which you do not know because my written poesy is so far below its subject that I dare not send them to you. My heart is so absolutely absorbed in yours, that I am never a moment without thinking of you, and if you ceased to inspire my life all would be suffering within me.

Can you now understand, Louise, what suffering it was for me to feel that I had given you, involuntarily, some cause for displeasure and yet be unable to divine what it was! That beautiful dual life suddenly arrested! my heart seemed turned to ice. In the utter impossibility of explaining this discord I believed you had ceased to love me; I resolved then — sadly, and at the same time, happily — to return to my condition of servitude; but your letter was brought to me, and has filled me with joy. Oh, blame me, scold me thus forever!

Forgive me, Louise; I have not changed; I give you the key of my nature with the submission of a child. I shall never make another mistake, another false step.

Louise, endeavor that the chain that binds me to you, and which you hold in your hand, be kept so taut that the slightest movement you make may henceforth tell your every wish to him who is

Your servant,

FELIPE.

XXIV.

LOUISE DE CHAULIEU TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

October, 1824.

My DEAR FRIEND, - You who have been married for months to a poor sick soul whose mother you are making yourself, you can have no idea of the frightful agitations and perplexities of the drama played in the depths of some hearts under the name of Love, - a drama which an instant can turn into tragedy, where death is in a look, in an answer heedlessly uttered.

You told me to test Felipe, and I have done so, reserving for the last a great but decisive trial. I wanted to know if I was loved quand même - the grand saying of royalists, why not of Catholies? I walked with him nearly one whole night under the lindens in the garden, and there remained not a shadow of doubt. I was to him as deeply loved, as grand, as pure, as I had ever been; he took not the slightest advantage of the favor I had granted him. Oh! he is a true Spaniard, a true Abencerrage! He climbed my wall to merely kiss my hand, which I held out to him in the darkness from my balcony; he came near breaking his neck, but that's nothing; a great many young men would have done the same, and Christians used to endure great martyrdoms to get to heaven.

"He climbed my wall to merely kiss my band, which I held out to him in the darkness from my balcony."



Two days ago I took the future diplomat, my very honored father aside, and said to him laughing:—

- "Monsieur, it is whispered about among our friends that you intend to marry your dear Armande to the nephew of a certain ambassador, under promise of vast settlements in the marriage contract. Your daughter weeps, but she is forced to yield to the inexorable power of paternal authority. Some of these gossips say your daughter hides beneath her tears a selfish and ambitious soul. We are going to the Opera to-night, to the box of the gentlemen of the Bedchamber, and Monsieur le Baron de Macumer will be there —"
 - "Oh! oh!" said my father, laughing.
- "You are not attending to my tale," I said, with a disdainful and sarcastic glance. "Listen; if you see me unglove my right hand please to deny this impertinent rumor, and show yourself displeased by it."
- "I see I may feel quite easy about your future. You have no more the head of a girl than Jeanne d'Arc had the heart of a woman. You'll be happy; for you will love no one, and let others love you."

On that, I burst out laughing.

- "What are you laughing at, my little coquette?" he said.
- "Armande laughs at everything," said my mother; "even at rheumatism, for she is not afraid of the night air."

"It is fully time she were married," said my father, "and I hope it can be done before I start for Spain."

"Yes, if you wish it," I replied simply.

Two hours later, my mother and I, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and Madame d'Espard were sitting like four roses in the front of the box. I sat a little sideways, with one shoulder only to the audience, so that I could see all without being much seen in that roomy box, which occupies a space between two columns opposite to the stage.

Macumer came; he planted himself close by, put his opera-glass to his eyes, and gazed at me at his ease. At the first interlude a young man, whom I call the king of knaves, came in, — a youth of feminine beauty, Comte Henri de Marsay. He produced himself with a sarcasm in his eyes, a smile on his lips, and a generally joyous air on his face. He paid his respects first to my mother and to Madame d'Espard, Madame de Maufrigneuse, the Comte d'Esgrignon, and Monsieur de Canalis; then he turned to me and said:—

"I don't know if I am the first to congratulate you on an event which renders you an object of much envy."

"Ah! a marriage?" I said. "Do you need a girl just from a convent to tell you that marriages which are talked about are never made?"

Monsieur de Marsay stooped over and said something

in Macumer's ear, and I perfectly understood from his glance and the motion of his lips that he was saying: "Baron, perhaps you are in love with that little coquette, who is only making use of you; but there is now a marriage in prospect; it is best to know what is going on."

Macumer gave the gossiping meddler a glance which. in my opinion, was a poem, and made him some such answer as this: ---

"I am not in love with any little coquette."

And he said it with a look which sent me into such raptures that I glanced at my father and took off my glove. Felipe evidently had not the slightest doubt of me, not one suspicion. He has fully realized all that I expect of his noble character; he has faith in me, in me only, and the world and its falsehoods cannot touch him. Not an eyelid winked; the blue blood of my Abencerrage did not even tint his olive skin.

The count left the box, and then I said to Macumer:

- "Monsieur de Marsay made an epigram on me?"
- "More than an epigram, an epithalamium," he replied.
- "That is Greek to me," I answered laughing, and rewarding him by a look which always puts him out of countenance.
- "I don't wonder!" exclaimed my father, addressing Madame de Maufrigneuse. "These gossiping rumors

are infamous. As soon as a girl goes into society there's a rage to marry her; people invent the greatest absurdities. I shall not marry Armande against her wishes. Now I must make a turn round the *foyer* and deny the rumor, or they will say next that I let it go uncontradicted so as to put the idea into the ambassador's head. Cæsar's daughter should be no more suspected than Cæsar's wife."

The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame d'Espard looked first at my mother and then at my father in their sparkling, shrewd, and lively way which asked a thousand silent questions. Those clever creatures saw at once there was something beneath the surface. Of all secret things love is the most public; women exhale it, I do believe! In fact, the woman who hides it is a sort of anomaly. Our eyes tell more than our tongues.

Well, after enjoying the delight of finding Felipe as grandly loyal as I wished him to be, I naturally wanted something more. So I made the signal agreed upon to bring him to my window by that dangerous way I told you of. A few hours later I found him, stiff as a statue, glued to the wall, his hand clasping the railing of the balcony, watching for the lights in my room.

"My dear Felipe," I said, "you were very nice to-night; you behaved just as I should have behaved myself if any one had told me you were going to be married."

- "I felt sure you would have told me yourself, and not have left me to hear it from others," he replied.
 - "What right had you to the information?"
 - "That of a faithful servant."
 - "Are you really one?"
 - "Yes," he replied, "and I shall never change."

The soft light of the moon seemed suddenly brightened by the glance he cast first at me, and then at the abyss between the wall and the balcony. He seemed to be asking if we could n't plunge there together and die. Then the lightning passed out of his eyes, repressed by the force of passion.

"An Arab has but one word," he said in a choking voice. "I am your servant; I belong to you; I will live my whole life for you."

The hand that clasped the railing seemed to tremble.

I laid mine on it and said: —

"Felipe, my friend, by my own will I am your wife from henceforth. Come to-morrow morning and ask me of my father. He wants to keep my fortune; you must promise me to acknowledge in the marriage contract that you have received it, and then, I feel sure, my father will accept you. Now go; I am no longer Armande de Chaulieu, I am Louise de Macumer, and I will commit no more imprudences."

He turned pale; I was really afraid his legs might give way under him. However, he jumped those ten

feet without doing himself any harm. Then, after causing me all that horrible agitation, he kissed his hand, and disappeared.

"Yes, I am loved," I said to myself, — "loved as never woman yet was loved."

I went to sleep with absolutely infantine content; my fate is forever settled.

About two o'clock the next day my father sent for me. I found him in his study with the duchess and Macumer. The proper speeches were most graciously exchanged. I simply answered that if Monsieur Henarez had come to an agreement with my father I had no reason to oppose their wishes. Thereupon, my mother invited the baron to dinner; after which, we all four took a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. I looked satirically at Monsieur de Marsay as he rode by on horseback, for his sharp eye at once saw Macumer and my father on the front seat of the calèche.

My adorable Felipe has had some new cards printed. See : —

HENAPEZ

(OF THE DUCS DE SORIA),
BARON DE MACUMER.

Every morning he brings me himself a bouquet of delicious hot-house flowers; in the midst of which I always find a letter containing a sonnet in Spanish to my perfections, made by him during the night.

I send you, as a specimen, the first and last of these sonnets, translated by me word for word and line for line, but without the rhymes.

FIRST SONNET.

Wearing a silken vest, I more than once,
With sword uplifted, heart in calm repose,
Stood forth to meet the wild bull's mad advance,
And seize its horns, sharper than Dian's crescent.
Singing an Andalusian seguidilla,
I stormed a breach beneath a rain of fire;
I staked my life upon that game of chance,
As unconcerned as though it were base lucre;
I could have faced the cannon at their mouths
But now — now I am timid as a hare,
Or child that sees a spectre in its dreams;
For when thy soft eyes rest upon my face,
An icy sweat breaks forth, my knees give way,
I tremble, I shrink back, my courage gone.

LAST SONNET.

Last night I longed to sleep to dream of thee,
But jealous slumber fled mine eyelids;
Then, looking forth upon the silent night,
Thinking of thee, mine eyes turned heavenward.
Phenomenal sight! which love alone explaineth,—
The firmament had lost its sapphire tints;
The stars, like diamonds dulled and vitrified,
Cast murky gleams and cold reflections;
The moon, her silvery mantle fallen from her,

Rolled sadly downward to the dim horizon.

Ah! thou hast robbed the heavens of all their splendor;

The whiteness of the moon is on thy brow,

The blueness of the sky is in thine eyes,

And the stars, too! — yes, thou hast robbed the heavens.

Could he prove to a girl more enchantingly that he is always thinking of her? What do you say to a love which expresses itself in a rich prodigality of flowers,—flowers of the mind and flowers of the earth? For the last ten days I've learned to know Spanish gallantry,—the famous gallantry of the olden time.

Ah! dearest, what is happening at La Crampade, where I walk in imagination watching the progress of our agriculture. Have you nothing to tell me of our mulberry trees, of our last winter's plantations? Does all succeed as you expected and hoped? Have the wifely flowers blossomed in your heart as well as those in the borders? Does Louis continue his madrigals? How do you get on together? How does the gentle purling of your brook of conjugal tenderness compare with the dashing torrent of my love? Don't be vexed, my dear pretty philosopher in petticoats. If you are, I'll send Felipe in person to kneel at your feet and bring me either your head or your pardon. My life here is so perfect, dear love, that I long to know about yours in Provence. Besides, I want your congratulations on the accession to our family of a Spaniard who is exactly the color of an Havana cigar.

But, seriously, Renée, I am uneasy; I am afraid you are hiding troubles from me lest you might sadden my joy—oh, naughty girl! Write me at once a good long letter, all about your life and its least little matters. All you ever write makes me thoughtful. Often when I am at the Opera watching the ballet-dancers pirouetting, I am saying to myself; "It is half past nine o'clock, perhaps she is going to bed; I wonder what she is thinking; is she happy? does the "freedom of will" still last, or has it gone the way of wills we no longer care for? A thousand kisses.

XXV.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO LOUISE DE CHAULIEU.

October

IMPERTINENT girl! why should I write to you? What is there to say? While you are living that life of fêtes and operas, diversified by the agonies, the quarrels, and the flowers of love (which you describe and I share as if it were a drama played before me) I am living my humdrum life, monotonous and regular as that of a convent. We are always in bed by nine o'clock, and up at dawn. Our meals are served with exasperating punctuality. Not the slightest "eventful circumstance" ever happens.

I have accustomed myself to all this without much difficulty. It may be the natural way of human existence; what would life be if not subjected to fixed rules which the astronomers say (and so does Louis) regulate the universe. Order is never wearying. Besides, I have imposed upon myself obligations as to my toilet, which take the morning hours between the time I rise and breakfast. I am determined always to look charming; it is a duty of womanhood; I like it myself, and it gives great delight to the old man and Louis.

After breakfast we usually take a walk. When the newspapers arrive I disappear, to attend to my household affairs, or to sit down and read, for I read a great deal, or to write to you. I return about an hour before dinner. After dinner we play cards, receive visits or make them. Thus I pass my days between a happy old man who has done with the desires of life, and a young one whose only happiness I am. Louis is so content, so satisfied, that his joy has ended by comforting my soul. Happiness for us is doubtless not in passionate emotions.

Sometimes, in the evenings, when I am not wanted to make up a rubber, I bury myself in my easy-chair and let my thoughts take wing to you. I enter into you; I am part of your beautiful, fruitful life, so varied, so violently agitated, and I ask myself to what your turbulent preface is leading; will it kill the book? You

may have the illusions of love, dear darling, but I — I have nothing now but the realities of household life. Yes, your loves seem like a dream to me! I find some difficulty in understanding why you seek to make them so romantic. You demand a man with more soul than senses, more grandeur and virtue than love; you expect that a girl's dream on entering life should become reality, you ask for sacrifices in order to reward them; you subject your Felipe to tests, not to learn his character, but to know if his submission, worship, and desire will be durable. But, my child, behind these fanciful decorations stands an altar at which an indissoluble, eternal tie is bound. The morrow of marriage. that terrible fact which changes the young girl into a woman, the lover into a husband, may overthrow all the fine scaffoldings of your subtlest precautions. Louise, all wedded pairs, whether they are ardent lovers, or whether they are two persons married as Louis and I were, have to seek in marriage what Rabelais has called a great perhaps.

I don't blame you, though it was rather giddy, for talking with Don Felipe in the garden, or for questioning him from your balcony, he being on the wall; but what troubles me, my child, is that you are trifling with life, and I am terribly afraid that life may trifle with you. I dare not offer you all the advice that my experience suggests to me for your happiness; but let me tell you once more, from the depths of my valley, that the viaticum of marriage is in two words,—resignation, and devotion. After all, I see that in spite of your tests and your coquetries and your sage observations, you will marry exactly as I did. 'The higher the desires, the deeper the precipitation, that's all.

Oh! how I should like to see the Baron de Macumer and talk with him for a few hours, — so anxious am I for your happiness.

XXVI.

THE BARONNE DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

March, 1825.

Felipe having agreed, with the generosity of a Saracen, to the wishes of my father and mother, by acknowledging the receipt of my fortune without receiving it, the duchess has become even better to me than she was before. She calls me her sly puss and her clever girl; she thinks me very knowing.

"But, dear mamma," I said to her the evening before the signing of the contract, "you attribute to policy and shrewdness and cleverness the results of love,—the truest, most single-minded, disinterested,

honest love that ever was. Do believe that I am not the clever girl you do me the honor to think me."

"Nonsense, Armande," she said, drawing me to her by my neck and kissing my forehead, "you did not want to return to the convent, or to remain unmarried, and yet, like the true Chaulieu that you are, you felt the necessity of restoring your father's family." (If you only knew, Renée, how flattering that was to the duke, who was listening to us.) "I have watched you all winter, running your little nose into everything, judging men very accurately, and divining the truth about social life in France. You have had the wit to pick out the only Spaniard capable of giving you the satisfactory life of a woman who is mistress in her own home. My dear child, you have treated him as Tullia treats your brother."

"What a school my sister's convent has been, to be sure!" remarked my father.

I gave him a look which stopped the words on his lips; then I turned to the duchess and said:—

"Mamma, I love my suitor, Felipe de Soria, with all the powers of my soul. Though this love was involuntary, it was strongly resisted when it rose in my heart, and I swear that I did not yield to it until I saw in the Baron de Macumer a soul worthy of mine, — a heart whose delicacy, generosity, devotion, strength, and sensibility fulfilled the requirements of my heart —"

- "But, my dear," she said, interrupting me, "he is as ugly as —"
- "As anything you please," I said quickly; "but I love that ugliness."
- "Armande," said my father, "if you love him, have the strength of mind to master your love; do not risk your happiness. Happiness, my dear, depends a great deal on the first days of marriage."
- "Leave us now, monsieur," said the duchess; "I have some advice to give my daughter."

When we were alone she continued as follows: --

"You are to be married in three days, my dear child, and therefore I ought to give you, without any bourgeois sentimentality, the serious advice which mothers of our station give their daughters. marry a man you love, therefore, I need not pity you. Neither do I pity myself; I have only known you for a year, and though that has been long enough to make me love you, it is not long enough to make me weep at losing your company. Your intelligence is greater even than your beauty; you have gratified my self-love as a mother; and you have behaved like a good and amiable daughter. For that reason, you will always find me an excellent mother. You smile? Alas! when mother and daughter have lived much together as women, they are apt to quarrel in after life. I desire to see you happy. Therefore listen to me. The love

you now feel is a girl's love, the natural love of all women who are born to attach themselves to men. But alas! my child, there is but one man in the world for each of us; there are not two men; and he whom we are formed to treasure is often not the one we have chosen for a husband believing that we loved him. However strange these words may seem to you, meditate upon them. If we do not love the man we have chosen, the fault is both in us and in him: sometimes also in circumstances which depend on neither. Nevertheless, there is nothing to prevent the man whom our family has chosen for us, or we have chosen for ourselves, from being the one beloved man of our life. The barrier which after marriage may be felt between us is often raised by a want of perseverance both on his part and our own. To make a husband a lover is quite as delicate a piece of work as to make our lover a husband, - you have just accomplished the latter feat in an admirable manner. Well, I say again, I am very desirous of seeing you happy. Remember, from this instant, that the first three months of wedded life will make you an unhappy woman unless you submit yourself in marriage with the obedience, tenderness, and intelligence you have shown in love. For, my little girl, you have carried on your innocent affairs with all the zest of clandestine love. If your new life of happy love brings disenchantment, possibly sufferings, come

and see me and let me know of them. Do not expect too much of marriage; it will in any case bring you as much pain as joy. Married happiness requires as inuch culture as love. If, by some mischance, you lose the lover in your husband, remember you may find him again under another form, that of the father of your children. There, my dear child, is the whole of social life. Sacrifice all to the man whose name you bear, whose honor and worldly consideration cannot receive the slightest smirch without inflicting a lasting injury on you. To sacrifice all to a husband is not only an absolute duty to women of our rank, it is also the wisest policy. The finest attribute of all the great principles of morality is to be true and profitable on whichever side they are examined. I think I have said enough on this head. One word more; I think you are inclined to jealousy; I am jealous myself; but I do not wish you to be jealous in a foolish way. Listen: Jealousy which lets itself be seen is like a player who lays his cards upon the table. To show your jealousy is to show your hand; is it not? You cannot then guess the game on the other side. In all things, we must learn to suffer in silence. I shall have a serious conversation with Macumer about you the evening before your marriage."

I took my mother's beautiful arm, and kissed her hand, leaving a tear upon it. I saw in that moral lesson,

worthy of her and of me, the deepest wisdom, a solicitude free from social bigotry, and, above all, a true esteem for my character. In these simple words she had summed up all the lessons that her life and her experience had sold to her, probably at heavy cost. She was touched, and said as she looked at me: -

"Dear little daughter! you are about to make a terrible passage; and most women, after they have made it, would fain do like the Earl of Westmoreland."

We laughed. To explain the joke, I must tell you that at dinner the previous evening a Russian princess had told an anecdote of how the Earl of Westmoreland. having suffered dreadfully from sea-sickness on his passage across the Channel, and wishing to go to Italy, turned back when he heard of the passage of the Alps. "One passage is enough for me," he said.

And so, Renée, your gloomy philosophy and my mother's warnings began to frighten me. The nearer marriage came, the more I gathered up my strength and will and emotions to face the alarming change from girlhood to womanhood. All our conversations returned to my mind; I reread your letters, and I discovered a secret sadness in them. These fears served to make me a conventionally pale and shrinking bride; so I was thought very charming and interesting the day the contract was signed. This morning, at the mayor's office (we went there quietly without ceremony), no one was present but the witnesses. I am finishing this letter while they are dressing me for dinner.

We are to be married this evening, at midnight, in the church of Sainte-Valère, after a brilliant reception. I must own my fears make me look like a victim, and give me a false air of modesty, which has won me an admiration I don't understand. I am delighted to see that my poor Felipe is as timid and girlish as I; the company distress him; he is like a bat in a glass shop.

"Happily this day has a morrow," he whispered in my ear. Poor fellow, he would fain he married without any one looking on; he is so shy and timid.

When the Sardinian ambassador came to the signing of the contract, be took me aside and presented a pearl necklace clasped by six magnificent diamonds. It was a gift from my sister-in-law the Duchesse de Soria. This necklace was accompanied by a sapphire bracelet, inside of which were engraved the words "I love thee before I know thee." Two charming letters were with these gifts, which I would not accept until I had asked Felipe's permission.

"For," I said to him, "I should not like you to accept anything that was not from me."

He kissed my hand, much moved, and said: -

"Wear them for the sake of that motto; the love thus offered is sincere."

Saturday night.

Here, my Renée are the last words of your girl friend. After the midnight mass we leave for an estate which Felipe, with delicate thoughtfulness, has bought in Nivernais on the road to Provence. My name is already Louise de Macumer; but by whatever name all others call me, for you there is no one but Louise.

XXVII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

September, 1825.

I HAVE not written to you, dearest, since the day of my marriage at the mayor's office, nearly eight months ago! As for you, not a line! That is shameful, madame.

Well, we started with post-horses for the château de Chantepleurs, the estate Felipe bought in Nivernais on the banks of the Loire, whither all our servants except my maid had preceded us, and where we ourselves arrived with extraordinary rapidity the following evening.

Since then, my dearest, all these months have elapsed and I have not written to you, but I am certain that you know why. Renée, I understand you now. It is

not to her nearest friend, nor to her mother, perhaps not even to herself that a happy bride can speak of her happy marriage. We must leave that memory in our souls as an emotion that belongs to ourselves alone, and for which there is no name. Ah! how can they call duty the tender follies of the heart, and the irresistible impulses of love. What horrible law has converted into "wifely duty," the thousand delicacies of taste, of sentiment, of chastity in a woman? Can it be a duty to give these flowers of the soul, these roses of life, these poems of lofty sensibility to a being we do not love? Rights, duties, in such emotions! why, they bud and blossom to the sun of love, or else their seeds must mildew in the chilly atmosphere of repugnance or aversion. No, love maintains its own prerogative.

Ah, my glorious Renée, I know you now in all your greatness. I bow the knee to you; I am amazed at your clear-sightedness. Yes, the woman who does not make, as I have made, a marriage of love, must fling herself into maternity, as a soul whom earth has disappointed flings itself into religion. From all that you have written me there issues one stern truth: none but a really great man can truly love a woman. I now know why. Man obeys two principles. In him are desire and sentiment. Inferior men mistake desire for sentiment; whereas superior men cover desire with the greater power of sentiment; sentiment communicates

reserve, and inspires them with reverence for woman. Sensibility, delicacy of feeling, is in proportion to the strength of the inward being, the soul; and the man of genius is the only man who can approach us on our own ground; he conceives, divines, and comprehends a woman; he lifts her on the wings of his desire restrained by sentiment. When mind and heart and senses all combine to bear us onward, it is not to earth we fall; we rise to higher regions, - unhappily. we do not always stay there.

Such, my dear soul, is the philosophy of my first months of marriage. Felipe is an angel. I can think aloud to him. It is not a figure of speech to say he is another myself. His grandeur is not to be expressed. He is more closely bound to me now that I am his; he finds in happiness fresh cause for love. I am to him the nobler part of himself. I see the future; years of marriage, far from changing his delights, will increase his confidence, develop new sensibilities between us. and strengthen our union.

What blissful rapture! My soul is so made that happiness sends vivid gleams throughout me; they warm me, they illuminate my whole inward being. The sun which gilds the summits when he sets glows with equal fervor in the rosy dawn. Ah! by what fair chance has all this come to me? My mother filled my mind with fears; her forebodings - which now seem

full of jealousy though free from vulgar pettiness — are cheated by the result; for, oh! my dearest, your fears, hers, and mine have taken wings.

We stayed at Chantepleurs more than seven months, like two eloping lovers who hide their happiness from angry parents. The roses of pleasure crowned our love, and will blossom throughout our lives. By a sudden turn of mind, one morning when I was even more fully happy than ever, my thoughts went suddenly to my Renée, to her marriage of social obedience, and I divined her life, I penetrated it! Oh! my angel. why are we fated to speak two different languages? Your marriage, purely social, my marriage of happy love, are two worlds which can no more comprehend each other than the finite can comprehend the infinite. You are on earth: I am in heaven. You are in the human sphere, I in the divine sphere. I reign by love. you reign by reasoning and by duty. I am so high that if there came a fall I should be shivered into a million fragments. But oh! I ought to keep silence; I am ashamed to tell you, dear, the glory, riches, wealth of joy in my springtime of love.

We are now in Paris, in a charming house in the rue du Bac, arranged for us by the same architect Felipe employed to arrange Chantepleurs. I have just been listening, my soul expanding with the sacred joys of marriage, to that celestial music of Rossini I used

to hear with an uneasy soul, — tormented, though I did not know it, with the questions of love. I am thought to be handsomer than I was, and I hear myself called "madame" with absolutely childish glee.

Friday morning

Renée, my beautiful saint, happiness draws me perpetually back to you. I feel in my heart that I am better and more loving to you than I have ever been. I have so deeply studied your married life by the beginning of my own, and I see you so grand, so noble, so magnificently virtuous, that I here and now proclaim myself your inferior, your sincere admirer, as well as your friend. Knowing what my marriage has proved to be, I see now that I should die were it other than what it is. But you live! Ah! by what instinct, tell me that? Never again will I make the slightest jest about anything you may say to me. Jesting, my dearest, is only ignorance; we laugh at that we know nothing about. Where recruits jest, veterans look grave; so I was told by the Comte de Chaulieu, a poor cavalry captain, who has never been farther than Fontainebleau in his life.

But, my own darling, I know you have not told me all. You have hidden some wounds from me. You suffer; I feel it. I have found ideas in the little that you have told me; and I have studied them, seeking to

discover at a distance the true reasons of your conduct. "She has never reached real marriage," I thought to myself one evening. "What is happiness to me is suffering to her; and she disguises her suffering under the pompous maxims of social morality."

Ah, Renée! that which is so glorious in true marriage is this: it needs no theories, no phylacteries, no grand words; whereas to justify the cruel social laws of our slavery and vassalage, men have heaped theory upon theory and maxim upon maxim. If your self-sacrifice is noble and sublime, is my happiness, sheltered by the white and gold canopy of the Church and sealed by the law in a mayor's office, an unnatural, abnormal thing? For the honor of the laws, for you, but above all, to sanction my own happiness, I want you happy, my Renée. Oh, tell me that you have begun to feel in your heart a little love for this Louis who adores you; tell me that the solemn and symbolic torch of Hymen has not served only to make you see the darkness of your fate.

Love, my angel, is to the moral nature exactly what the sun is to the earth. I return ever to that point, the light that lights me, and which will, I fear, consume me. Dear Renée, — who used to say in your ecstasies of friendship in the convent garden, beneath the grapevine (do you remember?), "Louise, I love thee so that if God appeared to me I would ask him to give me all

the griefs, and thee all the joys of this world. Yes, I have the passion of suffering,"—well, this day, dearest, I return thy wish; I pray to God to divide my happiness with thee.

Listen: I am certain that you are ambitious under the name of Louis de l'Estorade. Well, get him appointed deputy at the coming elections; he is nearly forty years old, and as the Chamber does not assemble for six months after the elections, he will by that time be of the required age for a man in public life. You will then come to Paris; that's all I need say. My father and the friends I shall now make here will appreciate you; and if your old father-in-law will entail his property, we will obtain the title of count for Louis. That's easily done, and — we shall be together!

XXVIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

October, 1825.

MY HAPPY LOUISE, — You dazzle me. For several minutes I have been holding before me your letter, on which a few of my tears are shining in the setting sun, sitting here alone beneath the barren rock where I have placed a bench. In the far, far distance, like a steel blade, gleams the Mediterranean. A few sweet-scented

shrubs shadow my seat; I have planted an enormous jasmine, plenty of honeysuckle, and Spanish broom. Some day the rock will be covered with clasping and climbing things. But now it is autumn, and all this verdure is beginning to look like a faded carpet. When I am there no one comes to disturb me, for they know I want to be alone. The seat is called "Louise's Bench." Does not that suffice to tell you that I am not alone there, although alone.

If I tell you all these details, so trifling to you, if I describe the coming verdure that I hope will one day clothe my bare and frowning rock, at the top of which an accident of vegetation has already placed a grand umbrageous pine like a parasol, it is that I find in these things a mental image to which I cling.

As I sat there enjoying your happy marriage, and (why should I not confess the truth to you?) envying it with all my strength, I felt the first movements of my child, which from the depths of my being reacted on the depths of my soul. This dull sensation, — a warning, a pleasure, a pain, a promise, a reality, — this happiness which is mine only in all this world, and is a secret between me and God; this mystery tells me that the rock shall be clothed with flowers, that the joyous laughter of a family shall echo here, that my womb is blessed, and shall give life abundantly. I have long felt myself born to be a mother. Therefore the first

certainty I received of bearing another life within me has brought me blessed consolations. A mighty joy has crowned the long, long days of devotion, which in themselves were a joy to Louis. "Self-devotion!" I said to myself, "is it not more than love; is it not the highest of all ecstasy, the generative ecstacy? Art thou not, O Devotion, the cause that leads to the effect, - the mysterious, unwearving divinity hidden beneath innumerable spheres in that unknown centre through which the worlds must pass?" Devotion, alone with its secret, filled with pleasures secretly enjoyed, on which no human being can east an eve profane, and which none can suspect; Devotion, a jealous God and a mighty, a conquering God, inexhaustible, because derived from the very essence of things, and thus ever equal to himself in spite of the strain upon his forces, - Devotion! ah, yes, there is the sign-manual of my life.

Love, Louise, is the action of Felipe upon you, but the shining of my life upon the family will produce an incessant action of that little world on me. Your beautiful gilded harvest will pass; mine, though delayed, will be more durable. It will renew itself again and again. Love is the sweetest larceny that Society ever made from Nature, but maternity, is not that Nature herself in her highest joys? My tears are dried. Love has made my Louis happy, but marriage has made me a mother and I will be happy too!

So thinking I came home to my white manor-house with its green blinds, and now I write you.

Dear, the most natural and the most surprising fact of a woman's life exists in me for the last six months. But I must tell you, in a whisper, that it has not troubled in any way either my heart or my intellect. I see them all happy about me. The future grandfather has become like a child himself; the father, on the contrary, is grave and anxious. Both are full of little cares for me; they talk to me of the happiness of being a mother. Alas! I alone feel nothing; I dare not tell you the state of absolute insensibility in which I find myself. I fib a little, so as not to sadden their joy. But I may speak honestly to you, and I must admit that so far as I have gone, maternity begins in the imagination.

Louis was as surprised as I was by my pregnancy. The child has come of itself without other call than his impatient wishes. Chance, my dear, is the god of maternity. Though such accidents are in harmony with the general desire of nature, my doctor, when I questioned him, did not deny that the children whom we so tenderly call "the children of love" are usually handsome and intelligent; and that their life is often, as it were, protected by the happiness that shone like a brilliant star on their conception. Perhaps, my own Louise, you will have in your motherhood joys that I

can never know in mine. Perhaps a woman loves the child of a man adored as you adore Felipe better than she can love the child of a husband married from duty or for the mere sake of being married.

These thoughts, kept in the depths of my heart, add to the other grave thoughts which the hope of mother hood has brought me. But, as there can be no family without a child, I long to hasten the moment when the pleasures of the Family will begin for me and be, thenceforth, my sole existence. Just now my life is all suspense and mystery. I am extremely curious to know the moment in life when motherhood begins. Surely it cannot be in the midst of those dreadful pains I begin to fear.

Adieu, my happy one! adieu, you in whom I live and fancy all those beautiful loves, those jealousies of a look, those whispers in the ear, those pleasures which wrap us, as it were, in another atmosphere, fill us with another blood, another light, another life. Ah! my treasure, I, too, know what love is. Don't weary of telling me all. Let us keep firmly to our agreement. As for me, I shall spare you nothing.

No, I will speak openly and tell you, in order to end this letter soberly, that in rereading yours an unconquerable fear has come over me. It seems to me as though your splendid love was a defiance of God. Will not the sovereign master of this world, Misfortune, be

angry at having no part in your festival? Was there ever a glorious happiness that he did not overthrow it? Ah! Louise, do not forget in the midst of your great good fortune to pray to God. Do good, be charitable and kind; exorcise adversity by humbleness. I am more pious now, since my marriage, than I was in the convent. You never speak to me of religion. In adoring Felipe you seem to reverse the proverb, and to care more for the saint than for God. But perhaps my fears come only from the excess of my love. You go together to church and do good in secret, don't you?

I am afraid you will think me very provincial in thus ending my letter; but remember, dear, that my fears are prompted by friendship, — friendship such as La Fontaine made it, uneasy and alarmed by a dream, a thought that is still all misty. You deserve to be happy, for you think of me in your happiness. And I think of you, dear, in my monotonous existence, which is a little gray, but full, full! sober, but productive!

And so, God bless you!

XXIX.

MONSIEUR DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

January, 1826.

MADAME, — My wife is anxious that you shall not learn through the common means of a billet de faire part

of an event which has given us great happiness. She has just given birth to a fine boy, whose christening we shall delay until your return to Chantepleurs. Renée and I hope you will then push on to La Crampade and be the godmother of our first-born. In this hope I have just inscribed the boy on the civil register as Armand-Louis de l'Estorade. Our dear Renée suffered much, with angelic patience. You know her, — she was supported, under this first trial of her vocation as mother, by a sense of the happiness she was giving to us.

Without committing myself to the rather ridiculous exaggerations of fathers who are fathers for the first time, I believe I may assure you that our little Armand is very handsome; you will easily believe it when I tell you that he has Renée's features and Renée's eyes. That shows that he is clever already.

Now that the doctor and the accoucheur assure us that Renée is out of all danger, that the child sucks well and the milk is abundant, — for nature is so rich and sound in her! — my father and I are free to give way to our great joy. Madame, that joy is so great, so full, it has so changed the whole existence of my wife and brought such brightness to the household, that I cannot but wish the same happiness for you. Renée has prepared an apartment for you, which we should like to make more worthy of our guests, but where you will, at

any rate, be received with fraternal cordiality, if not with splendor.

Renée has told me, madame, of your kind intentions toward us, and I take this occasion, as being particularly felicitious, to thank you for them. The birth of my son has determined my father to make sacrifices to which old men cannot always bring themselves. He has lately bought two estates. La Crampade brings in about thirty thousand francs a year. My father will petition the king to allow him to entail it; and if you will obtain for him, and not for me, the title you mention in your last letter you will be serving the interests of your godson.

As for me, I shall take your advice and enter the Chamber, partly for the purpose of bringing you and Renée together during the sessions. But nothing will give me more courage than to feel that you will be the protectress of my little Armand. Let us know that you will come, you so gracious and beautiful, so noble and brilliant, and play your part of fairy godmother to our eldest son. You will thus enable me to add eternal gratitude to the feelings of respectful affection with which I have the honor to be

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

LOUIS DE L'ESTORADE.

XXX.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

January, 1826.

MACUMER waked me just now to give me your husband's letter, my angel. I begin by saying yes. We shall go to Chantepleurs in April. It will be to me pleasure upon pleasure to go on to La Crampade, to see you, and to be godmother to your first child. But Macumer must be the godfather. A Catholic alliance with another sponsor would be odious to me. Ah! if you could have seen the expression of his face when I told him that, you would understand how that angel loves me.

"I am all the more anxious that you should go with me to La Crampade, Felipe," I said, "because we might, possibly, have a child there. I, too, I want to be a mother,—though, to be sure, I should be terribly torn between a child and you. In the first place if I saw you liking any living creature, even my son, better than me I don't know what would happen; Medea may have been right, after all; there's a world of good sense in the ancients \"

He began to laugh. So, my treasure, you have the fruit without the flowers, and I have the flowers without the fruit. The contrast of our fates continues. We

are philosophers enough to seek, and to find, some day, the meaning and the moral of it. Bah! I have only been married ten months; there's not much time lost; I can't make fate out of that!

We are leading the dissipated and yet full and abounding life of happy people. The days seem only too short. Society, which now sees me in the guise of wife and woman, thinks the Baronne de Macumer much handsomer than Louise de Chaulieu; happy love has its paints and patches. When, on a bright, sunshiny day, with the hoar frost hanging to the trees of the Champs-Élysées in white and starry garlands, we drive, Felipe and I, in our coupé before all Paris, united there where, only a year ago, we were so far asunder, many thoughts flock into my mind, and I fear to become too insolent in my happiness, — as you warned me I should, Renée, in your last letter.

If I am to know nothing of the joys of motherhood, you will tell them to me; and I shall be a mother through you; but in my opinion there can be nothing comparable to the delights of love. You will think me eccentric, fantastic, but a dozen times in the last ten months I have wished to die before I was thirty, in all the splendor of life, among the roses of love, in the bosom of joys; to go away satisfied, without disappointment, having lived in the sunshine, breathed the free ether, lost nothing of my crown, — not a leaflet,

— and kept my illusions, dying partly for love's sake. For think what it would be to live on with a young heart in an old body; to meet cold looks and unresponsive faces in a world where all men, even the most indifferent, smiled upon me; to be in short, a middleaged woman! Why, it is hell forestalled!

We have had, Felipe and I, our first quarrel on this very subject. I said I wished him to have strength of mind enough to kill me as I slept, without my knowing it, so that I might go from one dream to another. The monster would not hear of it. I threatened to leave him alone in life, and the poor fellow turned pale. The great constitutional minister, my dear, is a baby in my hands. It is incredible what youth and simplicity he hides under his Spanish gravity. Now that I think aloud with him as I do with you, and have put him on this footing of absolute confidence, we are constantly amazing one another.

My dear, the two lovers, Felipe and Louise, wish to send a present to the new mother. It must be something that pleases her. Now tell me frankly what you would like, for we hate the vulgar fashion of "surprises." We want to remind you of ourselves by some pleasant souvenir, — something that you will use every day, and something, too, that will not get worn out by use. Our gayest, happiest meal, for then we are always alone together, is breakfast. I have a fancy

therefore to send you a breakfast service, the designs on which shall all be *children*. If you approve, answer immediately; for if I am to bring it to you, it must be ordered at once; the artists of Paris are like the sluggard kings. This is to be my offering to Lucina.

Adieu, dear wet-nurse; I wish you all the motherly joys, and I await with impatience the first letter in which you will tell me everything. That mention of an accoucheur in your husband's letter made me shudder. Poor Renée! a child costs dear, does n't it? I will tell my godchild some day how much he ought to love you.

A thousand kisses, my angel.

XXXI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

It is nearly five months since my confinement, and in all that time, my dear soul, I have not had one little moment in which to write to you. When you are a mother you will excuse me more than you do now,—for I see you mean to punish me by writing seldom. Do write to me, darling. Tell me your pleasures, paint me your joys with those grand tints of yours; splash in the ultramarine and don't be afraid to pain

me, for I am happy now, - happier than you can ever imagine.

I went to be churched in great state; which is always the way in the old families of Provence. The two grandfathers, Louis's father and mine, each gave me an arm. Ah! never did I kneel before God in such a transport of gratitude. I have so many things to say to you, so many feelings to describe to you, that I don't know where to begin; but, from the innermost centre of it all rises one radiant thought, — that of my prayer in church!

When, in that sacred place, where so often I had doubted life and the future, I found myself transformed into a joyful mother, I thought I saw the Virgin of the altar, bending her head and calling me to look at the Divine Infant, who seemed to smile upon me. With what holy effusion of celestial love I presented our little Armand for the Church's benediction; the rector privately baptized him while awaiting the grand ceremony. But you will see us together, Armand and me!

My child—why, here am I calling you my child! but that's because it is the sweetest word that comes to the heart and mind and lips of a mother. So, dear child, to give you all the history of 'my new life, I dragged myself languidly about the gardens the last two months, wearied, worn out with the oppression of a burden I did not think could be so dear and sweet,

in spite of its discomforts. I felt such terrible apprehensions, I had such deadly forebodings that hope was not my strongest feeling. I used to reason with myself and try to think that nothing Nature wills ought to be feared; I vowed to myself that I would live to be a mother. Alas! for all this, I felt nothing in my heart of motherhood, even though I thought incessantly of the child that stirred within me; and even that — I mean those movements of an unknown life, which may be pleasant when we have already had children — causes more surprise than pleasure the first time. I speak to you frankly of myself, who am neither false nor affected, and whose fruition is more the gift of God, than of love. But a truce to those past sadnesses, which will never come back, I believe.

When the crisis came I had gathered within me the elements of such resistance that I bore the horrible torture marvellously, so they tell me. There was dearest, nearly one hour during which I fell into a sort of insensibility, the effects of which were those of a dream. I felt I was two beings: one, a torn and tortured envelope; the other, a placid soul. In that fantastic state, suffering bloomed like a garland above my head; it seemed as though a rose issued from my skull and grew, and grew, and wrapped me round. The rosy color of that flower crimsoned the air. I saw red. When I thus reached the moment at which soul and

body seem to separate, a pain, which made me think of instant death, laid hold of me. I uttered dreadful cries; then I found fresh strength to suffer more. The frightful clamor of my cries was suddenly drowned in me by the delicious song of the silvery wailings of my little being. No, nothing can describe to you that moment! It seemed to me that the world was crying with my cry, that all was pain and clamor, and then that all was hushed by that weak wail of an infant.

They put me back into my great bed, which seemed to me like paradise, though I was much exhausted. Three or four joyous faces, bathed in tears, showed me the child. My dear, I was horrified!

"That little monkey!" I cried, "are you sure it is a child?"

Then I turned over on my side, wretched at not feeling more of a mother than that.

"Don't worry yourself, my dear," said my mother, who was taking care of me, "you have given birth to one of the finest children in the world. Be careful not to fret your imagination; give all your mind to becoming an animal; be the cow that feeds to get her milk."

So I went to sleep with the firm intention of letting myself go at the will of Nature.

Ah! my angel, the awakening after pain, after those misty sensations; those days when all seemed dark, laborious, doubtful, was divine! The shadows were

alive with a sensation far, far, beyond the delight of hearing my child's first cry. My heart, my soul, my being, a self unknown awoke in its shell, so gray and painful hitherto, — awoke like a flower breaking from its calyx at the call of the sun. The little monster took my breast and sucked; there, there was the *flat luc!* Suddenly, I was a mother. Here is happiness, here is joy, joy ineffable — though it may not be without some pains.

Oh! my Louise, how you, too, will appreciate, when it comes to you, a pleasure that is all our own, between our child and God. The little being knows absolutely nothing but our breast. There is for him but that one shining spot in all the world; he loves it with all his strength, he thinks of nothing but this fountain of his life; he leaves it to sleep, he wakes to return to it. His lips are love inexpressible, and when they fasten there they cause both pain and pleasure, — pleasure which stretches into pain, pain which ends in pleasure. I cannot explain to you a sensation which radiates from my bosom to the sources of life; it seemed that a thousand rays start from that centre to rejoice both heart and soul. To bear a child is nothing; to suckle it, nourish it, is bearing it for all time.

Oh! Louise, there are no caresses of any lover that can equal that of the little rosy fingers which move so softly trying to clutch at life. Ah! those looks that

a babe casts first at our breast and then in our eyes! What dreams we have as we see him hanging by the lips to his treasure! And he fastens not less to the forces of the mind than to those of the body; he employs both blood and intellect; he satisfies beyond desire. The adorable sensation of his first cry, which was to me what the first ray of light must have been to the earth, came over me again when I felt my milk filling his mouth, when his eve first looked at me, when I saw in his first smile his first thought. laughed, dear! Well, that smile, that look, that bite, that cry, those four enjoyments are infinite; they go to the depths of the heart, and stir chords there that they alone can touch. The worlds must be fastened upon God as a child is fastened to every fibre of its mother; God is the great mother's heart. There is nothing visible, nothing perceptible in conception, nor even in pregnancy; but to nurse, my Louise, that is a joy for every moment. We see what becomes of our milk; it makes flesh, it blossoms at the tips of those darling fingers, which are like flowers in their delicacy; it makes those transparent nails, it goes to the silky hair, it moves in those little feet. A baby's feet! why, they are a language! that 's how he first expresses him-To feed, to suckle! Louise, it is a transformation I follow hour by hour with wondering eye. The cries - you do not hear them by the ear, but by the heart — the smiles of eyes and lips, the kicking of the little feet, ah! you understand them as though God were writing words to you in letters of fire on the firmament. There is nothing else in all the world that interests you; the father? bah! one would kill him if he woke the babe! We alone are all the world for the child, as the child is all the world for us. We are so sure our life is shared; we are so quickly compensated for the pains we have borne, the sufferings we endure! — for there are sufferings; may you never have, as I have, a broken breast, a wound those little rosy lips tear open daily. It would be torture, without the joy of watching the baby mouth besmeared with milk; and it is a sad rebuke to beauty, for it only happens, they tell me, to delicate skins.

In five months my young monkey has grown the prettiest creature that ever mother bathed with joyful tears, and washed and brushed and combed and decked with baby finery,— for God knows with what indefatigable ardor we dress and brush and comb and wash and change and kiss these little flowers! But my monkey is now no longer a monkey, he's a "baby," as my English nurse calls him; a pink and white baby; and, as he feels he is loved, he does n't cry too much. But, to tell the truth, I am seldom away from him, so he has n't much chance to cry; I try to enter into his little soul.

Dear, something has come into my heart for Louis, - a feeling which is not love, but which in a loving woman would be the crown of love. I almost think this tenderness, this gratitude goes beyond love. From all that you have told me, darling, there seems to me too much of earth in love; but here I find -- how shall I say it? - something religious, something divine in the affection a happy mother gives to him from whom proceed these long, these eternal joys. The joy of a mother is a light which lightens the future, but reflects upon the past the charm of memory.

Old Monsieur de l'Estorade and Louis have redoubled all their kindness to me; I am like a new person to them; their words, their looks go to my soul. The old grandfather is like a child himself; he looks at me admiringly. The first time I went down to breakfast and he saw me eating, and then giving suck to his grandson, he wept. The tears in his dry old eyes, where money usually shines, did me inexpressible good; it seemed to me that the good man felt my joys.

As for Louis, the very trees and the stones in the high-road would know he had a son. He spends whole hours gazing at that sleeping baby. He says he does n't know when he shall get accustomed to it. These excessive demonstrations of joy have revealed to me the extent of their fears and apprehensions.

My poor Louis has changed suddenly for the better

He reads and studies much more than he did. The child has doubled the ambition of the father. As for me, my dear soul, I grow happier and happier every hour; for every hour, every moment brings a new tie between a mother and her child. What I feel within me proves to me that this feeling is imperishable, natural, equable at all moments; whereas, I do suspect love of being intermittent. No one can love the same at all moments; the fabric of life cannot always be embroidered in vivid colors; love must and ought to cease. But motherhood has no decline to fear; it increases with every need of the child; it develops as he develops. Is n't it at once a passion, a need, a sentiment, a duty, a necessity, — happiness, in short?

Yes, my darling, this is the special life of womanhood. Our craving for self-devotion is satisfied; we can find no cause for jealousies here. Perhaps it is for us the only point at which Nature and Society are in harmony. Here Society has enriched Nature; that is, it has added to the instinct of motherhood the spirit of Family, the continuation of name, blood, and fortune. With what love a woman ought to surround the dear being who has first made known to her these wondrous joys, who has first brought forth the powers of her soul, and taught her the great art of motherhood! The law of primogeniture, which has come through all ages from the origin of the world, and is part of Society itself, cannot, it seems to me, be put in question.

"I grow happier and happier every hour; for every hour, every moment brings a new tie between a mother and her child."



Ah, how many things an infant teaches its mother! There are so many pledges made between ourselves and virtue in the ceaseless protection we give to its feeble being, that a woman is not in her true sphere until she is a mother. Then only do her powers unfold; then she puts in practice the duties of her life; then she has all its joys and all its pleasures. A woman who is not a mother is, must be, an incomplete being; she has missed her destiny. Make haste to be a mother, my darling; multiply your present happiness with my eestasy.

I left my letter abruptly, hearing your godson cry; I heard him from the farther end of the garden. I can't let this letter go without adding a few words; I have just reread it, and I am a little shocked at the commonness of some of the sentiments contained in it. What . I feel, Louise, I think all mothers must feel as I do, must express as I do; but perhaps you will laugh at me, as we laugh at those fathers who talk about the beauty and intellect of their progeny, and think none other is like it. But after all, my treasure, the grand meaning of this letter is this - and I repeat it: I am as happy now as I was unhappy before. This manor is to me the promised land. I have crossed my desert. A thousand kisses, dearest! Write to me. I can now read of your happiness and your love without shedding tears. Adien.

XXXII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

March, 1826.

Can it be three months, dear Renée, since I wrote to you, and since you have written to me? I am the guiltiest of the two, for I did not answer your last letter. But you are not touchy, — that is, you never used to be.

Your silence about the breakfast service made Macumer and me conclude that you agreed to our plan; and the charming little works of art leave Paris this morning for Marseille. The artists have been all these months about them; and when Felipe proposed to me to go and see the service before it was packed, I suddenly came to a sense that we had not written to each other since that letter which made me feel I was a mother with you.

My dear, this terrible Paris! that's my excuse; and now I should like to hear yours. Oh, the world, society, what a gulf! Have I not already said to you that to live in Paris one must be Parisian. The world here destroys all sentiments, steals your time, and would destroy your heart if you allowed it. What an amazing masterpiece is that creation of Célimène in Molière's "Misanthrope!" She is the woman of the world of

Louis XIV.'s time, and ours too, - the woman of the world of all epochs. Where should I be without my ægis, without my Felipe's love? I told him this morning, thinking of these things, that he was my saviour. Though my evenings are given up to fêtes, balls, concerts, theatres, I find at home the joys of love and its sweet follies, which expand my heart and efface the stains of the world.

I never dine at home except on the days when we invite persons whom we call friends. I have taken a day, Wednesday, when I receive; otherwise I am seldom in the house. I have entered into social competition with Mesdames d'Espard and de Maufrigneuse, also with the old Duchesse de Lenoncourt. My house is considered very amusing. I have allowed myself to be made the fashion, seeing how delighted Felipe is with my success. I give him all my mornings; but from four in the afternoon till two o'clock at night I belong to Paris. Macumer makes an admirable master of the house; he is so witty and so grave, so truly a grandee, and yet so gracious and graceful; he would make a woman love him, even if she had married him for "convenience."

My father and mother have started for Madrid. Louis XVIII. being dead, the duchess had no difficulty in getting our good King Charles X. to appoint her poet as second secretary to the embassy. My brother, the Duc de Rhétoré, deigns to look upon me as a personage. As for the Comte de Chaulieu, that fancy soldier owes me a debt of eternal gratitude. My fortune was used, before my father's departure, in buying and entailing on him an estate worth forty thousand francs a year, and in bringing about his marriage with Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, an heiress in Touraine. The king, who does not wish the name and titles of the houses of Lenoucourt and Givry to die out, is about to authorize my brother by letters-patent to take the name, title, and arms of Lenoncourt-Givry. How could a king of France allow those noble blazons and that heroic device, Faciem semper monstramus, to perish? Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, the granddaughter and only heiress of the Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, will have, they say, an income of over a hundred thousand francs. My father stipulated that the arms of the Chaulieus should be quartered on those of the Lenoncourts. brother will therefore be Duc de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu. The brother of Mademoiselle de Mortsauf, to whom this great fortune would go by right, is in the last stages of consumption; his death is expected at any moment. The marriage will take place next winter, after the mourning is over. I am told I shall have a charming sister-in-law in Madeleine de Mortsauf.

So you see, Renée, how wise my father was in the arguments he used to me. This result has won me the admiration of a great many persons, and it explains my

marriage. Because of his old affection for my grandmother, the Prince de Talleyrand extols Macumer, so that our success in the world is now complete. I reign in this Paris, where two years ago I was of no account. Macumer sees his happiness envied by every one, for I am held to be "the most brilliant woman in Paris;" you must know that there is a score of "the most brilliant women in Paris." All the men warble notes of love to me, or look their envy with their eyes. Really and truly there is in this concert of desires and admirations such intense satisfaction to one's vanity that I now understand the excessive extravagance women commit to enjoy these frivolous and passing pleasures. Such triumphs intoxicate one's pride, vanity, self-love, - in short, all the sentiments that make our self. This perpetual worship inebriates so violently that I am no longer surprised to see how egotistical, frivolous, and forgetful women are in this whirl of dissipation. Society goes to the head. We lavish the flowers of our hearts and minds, our most precious time, our most generous efforts, on persons who pay us with smiles and jealousy; who exchange the false coin of their phrases, compliments, and adulation against the pure gold of our courage, our sacrifices, our efforts to be beautiful, well-dressed, witty, affable, and charming to all. We all know how costly this business is; we know that we are robbed in it, and yet we give ourselves up to it all the same. Ah! my dearest, how one thirsts for a true heart; how precious to me are Felipe's love and devotion; and how I love you! With what joy do I make my preparations to go and rest at Chantepleurs, away from the comedies of the rue du Bac and the salons of Paris. I have just reread your last letter, and I can no better describe to you this infernal paradise of Paris than by saying that it is impossible for a woman of the world to be a mother.

I shall see you soon, dearest. We stay a week at Chantepleurs, and shall be with you about the 10th of May. Renée! we shall meet again after more than two years! What changes! We are both women, wives,—I the happiest of mistresses, you the happiest of mothers. If I have not written to you, darling, it is not from forgetfulness. And my godson, the little monkey, is he still as pretty? Does he do me credit? He is nearly nine months old now. I should like to be present when he takes his first steps in the world; but Macumer says that precocious children seldom walk at ten months old. What famous talks we shall have, like the good old times at Blois! I shall see, too, whether child-bearing spoils the figure, as they say it does.

If you answer, all-glorious mother, direct to Chantepleurs.

XXXIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

AH! my child, if you ever become a mother you will know if it is possible to write letters during the first two months we nurse a baby. Mary, my English nurse, and I are tired out all the time. I think I did not tell you that I set my heart on making everything myself. Before the great event I had sewn with my own fingers all the baby-clothes, and embroidered all the caps. I'm a slave, my darling, a slave day and night. In the first place, Armand Louis sucks when he wants to, and he is always wanting. Then he has to be washed and dressed and changed so often; and a mother loves to look at him asleep, and sing him songs, and carry him about in her arms if the weather is fine; so that really she has no time to herself. If you have society to take up yours. I have my baby, our baby! What a rich, full life! Oh, my dearest, you will soon be here, and you shall see for yourself!

But I am so afraid his teething will begin and he'll be cross when you are here, and a cry-baby. He does n't cry much now, but then, to be sure, I am always with him. Children only cry because they have wants nobody guesses, but I am on the look-out for all of his. Oh,

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Louise, my heart enlarges, while you say yours is getting belittled in the service of the world.

I am expecting you with all the impatience of a hermit. I want to know what you think of l'Estorade, just as, I make no doubt, you want to know what I think of Macumer. Write me from your last night's stopping-place. My men wish to go and meet our illustrious guests. I welcome you, queen of Paris, to our poor manor-house, where you will be loved indeed.

XXXIV.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO THE VICOMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE.

April, 1826.

The new address on my letter will announce to you, dearest, the success of my solicitations. Your father-in-law is now Comte de l'Estorade. I did not wish to leave Paris without obtaining what you desired; and I write you this line in presence of the Keeper of the Seals, who has just come to say that the ordinance is signed. We shall meet soon.

XXXV.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

MARSEILLE, July.

My abrupt departure from La Crampade must have astonished you, and I am ashamed of it: but as I am truthful in all things and love you as deeply as ever, I shall tell you the whole trouble candidly in four words, - I am horribly jealous. Felipe looked at you too much; you and he had little conversations beneath your rock which tortured me; they changed my nature and made me bad. Your really Spanish beauty must have reminded him of his own country and that Marie Heredia, of whom I am jealous — for I am jealous of the past. Your magnificent black hair and your brown eyes, that forehead where the joys of maternity seem to put into relief past suffering like the shadows thrown by a radiant light; that purity of the Southern skin, whiter than my blond fairness, that grandeur of form, that breast, shining among its laces like a delicious fruit when you give it to my beautiful godson, - all that wounded both my eyes and my heart. There was no use in putting blue-bells among my curls, or brightening their faded fairness with cherry ribbons. I paled before a Renée I never dreamed of finding in that oasis at La Crampade.

Felipe envied that child, too much, - so much that I began to hate it. Yes, that insolent baby life which fills your home, and brightens it, and laughs and cries there, I wanted it for my own. I saw regret in Macumer's eyes. I wept for two whole nights, unknown to him. I was tortured in your house. You are too beautiful as a woman, too happy as a mother: I cannot stay near you. Ah! hypocrite, you wrote me melancholy letters, pitying yourself! In the first place, your l'Estorade is charming; he talks agreeably; his hair with its few white threads is very pretty; his eyes are fine, and his Southern manners have a nameless charm which pleases. From what I have seen I think there can be no doubt of his election as deputy from the Mouths-of-the-Rhone: he will certainly make his mark in the Chamber, and we will help him, for I shall be always at your service in whatever concerns your ambitions. The miseries of his exile have given him that calm, composed air which seems to me to be at least one half of statesmanship. In my opinion, dear, the essential thing in politics is to look grave. I tell Macumer his looks ought to make him a great statesman.

Well, now that I have seen with my own eyes that you are happy, I wing my way back, contentedly, to my dear Chantepleurs; where Felipe must arrange to be a father, for I will never see you again until I have a child at my breast as beautiful as yours. I deserve

all the names you choose to give me; I'm absurd, infamous, without common-sense. Yes, a woman is all that when she is jealous. I'm not angry with you, but I suffered, and you must forgive me for getting away from that suffering. Two days more and I should have committed some dreadful folly. Yes, I should have made an exhibition of bad taste.

But in spite of these torments which gnawed my heart, I am glad I went, glad I have seen you so beautiful, so fruitful; still my friend in the midst of your maternal joys, as I am ever yours in the midst of my precious loves. Here, at Marseille, a few miles away from you, I am already proud of you, proud of that noble mother of a family you are fated to become. With what strong sense you divined your vocation! you seem to me to have been born for a mother rather than for love, just as I was born for love rather than for motherhood. Some women can be neither; they are too ugly or too dull. A good mother, and a wife who is her husband's mistress, should have at all times sense, judgment, intelligence, and yet know how to employ the exquisite charms of womanhood. Oh! I observed you well; is n't that as good as telling you, my kitten, that I admired you? Yes, your children will be happy; they will be well brought up, bathed in the fountains of your tenderness, taught by the lights of your own soul.

Tell the truth about my departure to Louis, but give it some colorable pretext in the eyes of your father-in-law. Felipe does not know why I came away, and will never know. If he asks, I shall invent some reason. Perhaps I will tell him that you were jealous of me. Grant me that little fib.

Adieu; I write in haste that you may get this letter at your breakfast-hour; the postilion is charged to give it into your own hand. Come to Chantepleurs in October; I shall be all alone during the time that Macumer is in Sardinia, where he wishes to make great improvements to his estates. At any rate, that's the project he has in mind at the present moment; it is a fancy of his to be always making projects; it makes him feel independent; but I notice that he is quite uneasy in telling them to me. Adieu.

XXXVI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

My dear, our astonishment was inexpressible when we learned at breakfast-time that you were gone; and when the postilion who took you to Marseille brought me your crazy letter my amazement was beyond words. Why, your husband and I were talking of you and

your happiness on "Louise's bench" under the rock; and you are very wrong to be displeased by it. Ingrata! I condemn you to return here at my first call. In that odious letter, scribbled on inn paper! you did not even tell me where you were going next; so I direct my answer to Chantepleurs.

Listen to me, dear sister of my choice, and remember first and before all, that I want you happy. Your husband, my Louise, has a depth of soul and thought which are as imposing as the gravity of his manner and his noble countenance. In his very ugliness, which is so distinguished, in that velvet glance lies a power that is really majestic; it was therefore some time before I could establish an intimacy with him, without which it is difficult to observe a nature to its depths. The man has been a diplomat, remember, and he adores you as he adores God; therefore he would of course dissimulate about his deepest feelings. And yet, after a while, I ended by discovering, without his knowledge and in spite of his diplomacy, certain things which you, my darling, have no idea of.

You and I represent two things. I am slightly the embodiment of Reason, you are Imagination. I am grave Duty, you are gay Love. This contrast, which originally existed in our natures, fate has been pleased to continue in the circumstances of our lives. I am a humble country viscountess, ardently ambitious, desir-

ous of leading her family to honor and prosperity; whereas the world already bows down to the Baron de Macumer ex-Duc de Soria, and to you, duchess by right, who reign a queen in Paris, where it is so difficult even for kings to reign. You already enjoy a fine fortune, which Macumer will double if he carries out his projects in Sardinia on his vast domains; the resources of which are well-known, by the bye, at Marseille. Admit, therefore, that the one of us two who ought to be jealous is I.

However, let us thank God that our hearts are both placed too high to suffer our friendship to descend to such vulgar pettiness. I know you; you are ashamed at having left me. Now, in spite of your flight, I will not spare you one word of certain things I meant to say to you to-day on your bench beneath my rock. Read me, I implore you, with attention, for the matter concerns you and your happiness more than it does Macumer, — though he counts for much in my moral.

In the first place, my darling, you do not love him. Before two years have passed you will weary of his adoration. You will never see in Felipe a husband, only a lover whom you can play with heedlessly, as all women do with their lovers. No, he does not compel your respect; you do not feel that profound esteem, that tenderness mingled with awe, which a woman who loves has for the man in whom she sees a god. Oh!

I have studied love, my angel; I have thrown, more than once, a plummet into the gulf of my heart. After examining you through and through I say again: You do not love.

Yes, dear queen of Paris, like other queens you would like to be treated as a commoner woman; you would like to be ruled, mastered by some strong man who, instead of adoring, would bruise your arm in a moment of jealousy. Macumer adores you too much to blame you or oppose you. A single look of yours, a single coaxing word controls his will. Sooner or later, you will despise him for loving you too much. Ala's! he spoils you, just as I spoilt you at the convent; for you are one of the most fascinating of women, and you possess one of the most enchanting minds that soul can imagine. Above all, you are true, — and often the world requires, for our own happiness, a species of falsehood to which you will never condescend.

For instance: the world demands that a woman shall never allow the power she exercises over her husband to be seen. Socially speaking, a husband should no more seem the lover of his wife, when he is really so, than the wife should play the part of mistress to her husband. You both break this social law. My child, the thing the world pardons least (if I am to judge by what you have told me of it) is happiness; and therefore, it is best to hide it. But this is a small matter.

There is between two lovers an equality which should never, as I think, appear between a wife and her husband, under pain of a social overturn which would lead to irreparable evils. A man without power is a fearful thing, but there is something worse, — a man made powerless. Within a given time you will reduce Macumer to be but the shadow of a man; he will no longer have a will; he will no longer be himself, but a thing trained to your use; you will have so assimilated him, as it were, that instead of being two persons in the household there will be but one, and that one, consequently, incomplete. You will suffer from it, but the evil will be without remedy before you deign to open your eyes.

We may say and do what we like, but our sex will never be endowed with the qualities which distinguish a man; and these qualities are all the more necessary because they are indispensable to the Family. At this moment, in spite of his devotion, Macumer has a glimpse of these truths; he feels himself diminished by his love. His journey to Sardinia shows me that he seeks by a momentary separation to recover possession of himself. You have not hesitated to use all the power conferred on you by love. Your authority shows itself in your gesture, in your glance, in your tones. Oh! dearest, you are, as your mother told you, a courtesan, working on a man's love. You have seen, I make no doubt, that I am superior to Louis, but I

would never contradict him; I respect him before the public as the power in the family. Hypocrisy, you say. In the first place, the counsels I think it right to give him, my opinions, my ideas, I reserve for his own ear when we are alone together; but even then, my dear love, I do assure you I never show any sense of superiority to him. If I did not continue privately, as well as publicly, to treat him with the respect of a wife, he would no longer have faith in himself.

My dearest, the perfection of loving-kindness is to efface ourselves so thoroughly that those we benefit shall not think themselves inferior to the one who benefits them; and this form of hidden devotion is full of untold pleasure. Why! it has been my glory to mislead you, yourself, and to hear your praises of Louis. Prosperity, happiness, and hope, have made him regain in two years all that misfortune, misery, abandonment, and doubt had made him lose.

And so I say that, according to my observation, you love Felipe for your sake, and not for his sake. There is great truth in what your father said to you; the egotism of a great lady is lurking beneath the springtide flowers of your love. Ah! my child, I must love you well to be willing to write to you such cruel truths!

Let me tell you (on condition that you will not repeat one word of this to the baron) the end of one of my talks with him. We had been singing your praises in every key,—for he sees plainly enough that I love you with a sister's love,—and I led him, little by little, into confidences.

"Louise," I said to him, "has not yet known the trials of life; fate has treated her like a petted child, and perhaps she will end by being unhappy if you do not make yourself a father to her as well as a lover."

"But can I?" he said.

He stopped short, like a man who sees a precipice before him. That exclamation sufficed to show me his state of mind. If you had not gone away so suddenly he would, in a few days' time, have said more to me.

My angel, when a man becomes conscious that he is powerless, when he finds satiety in happiness, when he feels, I will not say degraded, but without dignity in your presence, the blame his conscience will put upon him will cause him a species of remorse, painful to you because you will then feel yourself guilty of it. Then you will yourself despise the man you have not accustomed yourself to respect. Reflect on that. Contempt in a woman's heart is the first form of hatred. As you are noble in heart, you will always remember the sacrifices Felipe has made for you; but there will then be no more that he can make, having, as it were, served his whole self to you in this first love-feast; and sorrow

to the man and to the woman who leave no longer anything to be desired. All is then over.

Oh! Louise, change, change; there is still time. If you will behave with Macumer as I behave with Louis you can rouse the lion in that truly great man. Will you not feel a glorious pride in exercising your influence in higher ways than to your own profit, — in making a man of genius a great man, just as I am making a superior man out of a commonplace one?

If you had remained with us I should still have written you this letter. I should have feared your petulance and your wit in a conversation, whereas I know that you will reflect upon the future as you read my words. Dear soul! you have all things to make you happy; don't ruin your happiness! Go back in November to Paris. The occupations and distractions of society, of which I was disposed to complain, are, I see, diversions necessary to your home life, which is too intimate. A married woman should have her reserves, and so should a mother. The mother of a family who does not let her presence be desired by absenting herself sometimes from the household cheapens her value. If I have several children, which I desire for my own happiness, I declare to you that as soon as they reach a certain age I shall reserve to myself some hours every day in which to be alone; for I think we ought to be desired by every one, even our children.

Adieu, dear jealous one. Don't you know that a common woman would have been flattered to have caused you that rush of jealousy? Alas! I grieve over it; for I am, and can only be, a mother and a true friend. A thousand kisses. Say anything you like to excuse your departure; if you are not sure of Felipe, I am sure of Louis.

XXXVII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

GENOA.

My DEAREST, — I have had a fancy to see Italy, and am delighted to have run away with Macumer, whose projects about Sardinia are postponed.

This glorious land enchants, nay, ravishes me. Here the churches, and especially the chapels, have a dainty, loving air which might make a Protestant long to be a Catholic. Macumer has been much fêted; the king congratulates himself on acquiring such a subject. If I desired it Felipe would be made Sardinian ambassador to France: we receive much attention at court.

If you write to me address your letters to Florence. I have no time to write to you in detail, but I will tell you about our journey when we meet in Paris. We shall stay here only one week; then we go to Florence

by Livorno, stay a month in Tuscany and a month at Naples, so as to reach Rome in November. We shall return by way of Venice, spend the first two weeks of December there, go to Milan and Turin, and be back in Paris for the month of January. It is like a wedding journey; the novelty of the scenes renews our dear honeymoon. Macumer has never been in Italy, and we have made our entrance by that glorious road, the Cornice, which must have been constructed by the fairies.

Adieu, my treasure. Don't be vexed if I can't write; it is impossible to get a moment to one's self in travelling. I have only time to see, feel, and gloat over my impressions. But as for telling them! I shall wait till they take the tints of memory.

XXXVIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

September.

My DEAR LOUISE, — There is a long letter waiting you at Chantepleurs, — a reply to the one you wrote me from Marseille. This "wedding journey" which you tell me of, so far from diminishing the fears I have expressed to you in that letter, make me so anxious

that I beg you to write to the Nivernais and tell your people to forward it.

The ministry have resolved, they say, to dissolve the Chamber. If this is a misfortune for the crown, which ought to have employed this last session of the legislature in making laws necessary to the consolidation of its power, it is also a misfortune for us. Louis will not be forty until the close of 1827. Fortunately, my father consents to be made deputy, and will resign when the time comes.

Your godson has taken his first steps without his godmother; he is delightful in every way, and is beginning to make me those gracious little signs and gestures which tell me he is no longer an organism which sucks, a little animal, but a soul; his smiles are full of thoughts. I have been so fortunate in mynursing that I can wean him in December. One year suffices. Children who are suckled too long become stupid; I hold to all the old nurses' dictums.

You must be having a glorious success in Italy, my beautiful fair one. Tenderest love.

XXXIX.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

Rome, December.

I HAVE received your infamous letter, which my steward, at my request, has forwarded from Chantepleurs. Oh, Renée! But I spare you all that my indignation suggests. I will tell you only the effects produced by your letter.

On our return from the fête given to us by the ambassador, where I shone with all my brilliancy, and from which Macumer returned in a passion of admiration for me I cannot describe to you, I read him your horrible letter; and I read it weeping, at the risk of looking ugly to him. My dear Saracen fell at my feet, calling you demented, drivelling; he took me to the balcony whence we could overlook a part of Rome. There his language was worthy of the scene that lav before our eyes, - for the moonlight was superb. As we have learned Italian, and always speak it now, his love, expressed in that soft language so favorable to passion, seemed to me sublime. He told me that even if you spoke the truth and were prophetic, he preferred an hour of love with me to a century of other life; that counting life as he did, he had already lived a thousand years. He implored me to be ever his mistress, and said he wished no other title or distinction than that of my lover. He was, he said, so proud and happy in knowing, day by day, how dear he is to me, that if God appeared to him and bade him choose between thirty years of life according to your doctrines, with five children, and five years of life containing our precious, absorbing, exclusive love, his choice was made, - he would rather be loved as I love him, and die

These protestations, said in my ear, my head on his shoulder, his arm round my waist, were suddenly interrupted by the cry of a bat or an owl. That omen of death made such a cruel impression on me that Felipe had to carry me, half-fainting, to my bed. But don't be anxious; although that horoscope echoed dismally through my soul, this morning I am quite well again. When I rose I threw myself on my knees before Felipe and with my eyes on his, his hands in mine, I said to him: ---

"My angel, I am but a child; Renée may be right; perhaps it is only love that I love in thee; but be sure of this, that there is, and can be, no other sentiment in my heart, and that I love thee according to my nature. If in any of my ways, in the slightest things of my life and of my soul, there is anything contrary to what you wish, or have hoped for in me, tell me so, make me see

it! I shall be glad to listen to thee, and guide my conduct by the light in thine eyes. Renée frightens me, she loves me so!"

Macumer had no voice with which to answer me: he burst into tears. I thank you, Renée; I did not know till now how deeply my noble, my royal Macumer loves me. Rome is the city for love. When we have a passion it is here we should come; the arts and God are sharers in it.

We shall find the Duc and Duchesse de Soria in Venice. If you write, direct to Paris, for we leave Rome in three days; the ambassador's fête was given as a farewell to us.

P.S. Oh, you dear simpleton! your letter shows that you know nothing of love beyond ideas of it. Learn this: love is a principle, the effects of which are so dissimilar that no theory can embrace or lay down laws for them. This is meant for the instruction of my philosopher in petticoats.

XL.

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

January, 1827.

My father is elected deputy, my father-in-law is dead, and I am about to be confined again. Those

are the events of the close of this year in our household. I tell them to you at once to remove the painful impression of my black seal.

Dearest, your letter from Rome makes me tremble. You are two children. Felipe is either a diplomatist who is dissimulating, or a man who loves you as he would love a courtesan to whom he abandons fortune and all the higher qualities that are in him. You take me for a driveller, so I shall say no more, - except this: that in studying our two destinies I have come to a harsh conclusion: If you wish to be loved, do not love.

Louis obtained the cross of the Legion of honor when he was appointed member of the general council. Now, as he has been a member nearly three years, and as my father (whom you will no doubt see in Paris during the session) has asked for the grade of officer for his son-in-law, will you do me the kindness to employ a little strategy in the matter and keep a motherly eye upon it? But be sure not to meddle with the affairs of my very honored father, the Comte de Maucombe, who wants to be made a marguis; reserve all your favors for me. When Louis is a deputy, which will be next winter, we shall go to Paris, and move heaven and earth to obtain for him some place in the general government. I mean then to lay by our present income and live on the salary of the place. My

father's opinions are between the centre and the right, and he only wants a title. As our family was famous as far back as King René, Charles X. can hardly refuse a Maucombe. I am rather afraid my father may take it into his head to solicit some favor for my younger brother; but if the marquisate is kept dangling a little too high above his head he can only think of himself.

January 15.

Ah! Louise, I have been in hell! If I have the courage to speak to you of my sufferings it is because you are another myself. I shall try to never again let my thoughts go back to those five dreadful days. The very word "convulsion" sends a shudder through my being.

Five days! They were not days, they were five centuries of suffering. So long as a mother has not suffered this martyrdom she knows nothing of the meaning of that word "suffering." I thought how happy you were to have no children; judge by that how beside myself I was.

The evening before the terrible day, the weather, which was heavy and almost hot, seemed to oppress my little Armand. He, usually so gentle and caressing, was cross; he cried at everything; wanted to play and broke his toys. Perhaps all ailments first show themselves in children by a change of temper. After ob-

serving this unusual naughtiness I noticed that Armand flushed and then paled, - symptoms I attributed to the cutting of four large teeth which were all coming through at the same time. So I put him to bed near me, waking up constantly to watch him. During the night he had some fever; but that did not make me uneasy, for I still attributed it to the teeth. Toward morning he said, "Mamma!" asking for something to drink, but in such a voice, and with such a strange, convulsive gesture that my blood froze. I sprang from the bed to get him some sugared water. Imagine my horror when, on giving him the cup, I saw he was rigid: he kept repeating "Mamma," in that voice which was not his voice - indeed it was not a voice at all. I took his hand, it made no motion, it was stiff. I put the cup to his lips. The poor little fellow drank in a terrifying way, in convulsive gulps, and the water made a strange noise in his throat. Then he clutched desperately at me, and I saw his eyes turned by some inward power, till the whites only showed. I uttered a dreadful cry; Louis came.

"A doctor! a doctor!" I cried, "he is dying!"

Louis disappeared, and my poor Armand said again, "Mamma! mamma!" and clung to me. That was the last moment when he knew he had a mother. The pretty veins of his forehead were now injected, the convulsion began.

For a whole hour before the doctors came I held that child, - so vigorous, white and rosy, that flower, my pride, my joy, - stiff as a piece of wood; and what eyes! I shudder as I recall them. Black, shrunken, shrivelled, mute, my pretty Armand was a mummy. A doctor, two doctors, brought by Louis from Marseille. stood planted there upon their legs, like two birds of ill omen; they made me shudder. One talked of brain fever, the other said it was only convulsions common to children. The doctor from our village seemed to me the wisest, because he prescribed nothing. "It is teething," said one; "It is fever," said the other. At last they agreed to put leeches on the neck, and ice to the head.

I felt like dying. To see that blue-black body, with not a cry, not a motion, in place of a creature so full of life and noise. There was a moment when my mind wandered, and I laughed out loud when I saw the leeches hanging to that neck I loved to kiss, and that charming head with its cap of ice. Dear, they cut off all the hair you thought so pretty in order to apply the Every ten minutes or so the convulsion returned; the poor child was twisted into every shape; he was sometimes pale, sometimes violet. When his limbs, always so soft and flexible, struck together they gave a sound like wood. That insensible little creature had smiled to me, spoken to me, and had just called me

"Mamma!" As I stood there helpless, volumes of anguish crossed my soul and convulsed it as hurricanes convulse the sea; I felt every tie by which a child is bound to our hearts shaken.

My mother, who might have helped, advised, supported me, was in Paris. Mothers know more about convulsions than doctors, I think. After four days and four nights, passed in alternations of hope and fear that nearly killed me, the doctors all agreed to apply a horrible ointment to make an open sore. Sore! on my Armand! who was playing and laughing five days earlier and learning to say "godmother!" I refused, and said it was best to trust to nature. Louis scolded me; he believed in the doctors. A man is always a man. In these terrible illnesses there comes a moment when death takes form, and during that moment this remedy, which I abhorred, seemed to me safety. Louise, the skin was so dry, so rough, so hard that the ointment could not bite it! Then I burst into tears. there at the bed's head - till the pillow was wet. The doctors! they were at dinner! Seeing myself alone, I stripped from my child those medical appliances: I took him, half beside myself, in my arms; I pressed him to my bosom, I leaned my forehead on his forehead. and I prayed to God to give him my life, striving with all my might to communicate it to him; I held him so for several minutes, thinking to die with him

rather than be separated by life or death. Dear, I felt his limbs relax; the tension yielded, my child moved, the horrible dark colors disappeared. I cried out as I did the night he was taken ill. The doctors came up; I showed them Armand.

"He is saved!" said the elder of them.

Oh! what words! what music! the heavens opened. Two hours later Armand was reborn. But I was annihilated. Without that balm of joy nothing could have saved me from an illness. Oh, my God! by what anguish hast thou attached the child to the mother. What hooks hast thou buried in our hearts to which he hangs! Was I not mother enough, I, who wept for joy at his first stammerings, his first steps, - I, who have studied my child for hours together, striving to know my duty and teach myself the dear profession of a mother? Was there need of causing me this terror; of showing these awful images to me who made my child an idol?

As I write to you, my Louise, our Armand is laughing and shouting and playing. I try to discover the cause of this horrible child's malady, remembering always that I am now pregnant. Was it teething? Was it some special action of the brain? Have children who endure these convulsions some imperfection in their nervous systems? All these ideas troubled me as much for the present as for the future. Our country

doctor says it is a nervous affection caused by teething. I'd give all my teeth if Armand could only have all his. When I see one of those white pearls just piercing his inflamed gums, a cold sweat breaks out all over me.

The heroism with which my dear angel suffered shows me he will have something of my fortitude; he gave me glances that cleft my heart. The science of medicine does n't know much on the causes of that sort of tetanus, which ends almost as rapidly as it begins; and which cannot be prevented or cured. One thing is certain, I repeat it: to see her child in convulsions is hell for a mother. With what passion I kiss him now! How long I can hold him in my arms and carry him!

To have this anguish when I expect to be confined again in six weeks has been a terrible aggravation of the martydom; I fear its effects on the coming one.

Adieu, my dear beloved Louise; don't desire children, that's my last word.

XLI.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

PARIS.

Poor angel! Macumer and I forgave you all your badnesses on hearing of your troubles. I shuddered, I suffered on reading the details of this double torture, and 1 certainly am less grieved at having no children. But let me hasten to tell you of Louis's appointment; he may now wear an officer's rosette. You want a little girl, and probably you will have one; your two wishes will be satisfied, oh, you lucky Renée!

The marriage of my brother and Mademoiselle de Mortsauf was celebrated on our return. Our charming king, who is really delightfully kind, gave my brother the reversion of the position of first gentleman of the Bed-chamber which his father-in-law now holds. "The office ought to go with the title," the king said to the Duc de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu; but he insisted that the arms of Mortsauf should be added to those of Lenoncourt.

My father was a hundred-fold right in all he preached to me. Without my fortune nothing of all this could have taken place. My father and mother came from Madrid to be present at the marriage, and return there the day after the fête I give to-morrow to the bride and bridegroom.

The carnival will be very brilliant this year. The Duc and Duchesse de Soria are in Paris. Their presence makes me rather uneasy. Marie Heredia is certainly one of the most beautiful women in Europe, and I don't like the way Felipe looks at her. So I have redoubled in tenderness to him. "She would never have loved you thus," is a speech I take care not to say

to him in words; but it is written in my looks and in all my movements. Heaven knows how coquettish and elegant I make myself. Yesterday Madame de Maufrigneuse said to me: "My dear, we must all lay down our arms to you."

The fact is I amuse Felipe so that he must think his sister-in-law as stupid as a Spanish cow. I don't so much regret not having a little Saracen of my own, because the duchess is on the point of being confined here in Paris, and it spoils her beauty; if she has a boy it is to be called Felipe in honor of the exiled brother. Malignant fate demands that I shall be its godmother.

Adieu, dearest. I shall go to Chantepleurs very early this year, for our journeyings have cost an exorbitant sum. I shall leave here by the end of March, and live economically in Nivernais. Besides, Paris bores me. Felipe sighs as I do for the dear solitude of our park, our cool meadows, and the Loire, spangled with its sands — ah! no river is like it. Chantepleurs will seem to me delightful after the pomps and vanities of even Italy; for, after all, such splendors do weary one, and the glance of a lover is more beautiful than any capo d'opera, whatever it may be.

We shall expect you there, and I promise not to be jealous of you again. You may sound the heart of my Macumer at your ease, and fish up all the interjections you like, and lay hold of all his scruples; I give him

over to you with superb confidence. Ever since that. scene in Rome Felipe loves me more than ever. He told me yesterday (he is looking over my shoulder as I write) that his sister-in-law, the Marie of his youth, his betrothed Marie, the Princess Heredia, his earliest dream, was - stupid! Oh, dearest, I am worse than an opera-girl; that speech gave me pleasure! I had remarked to Felipe that she spoke French incorrectly; she pronounces sain for cinq, and cheu for je; and then, she may be beautiful, but she has no grace, and. not the slightest vivacity of mind. When one pays her compliments she looks at you like a woman who is not accustomed to receive them. With a nature like his, Felipe would have left her two months after marriage. The Duc de Soria, Don Fernando, is very well suited to her; he is generous, but he is a spoilt child, - it is easy enough to see that. There! I might be satirical, and make you laugh; but I'll say no more than the truth.

Tender regards, my darling.

XLII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

My little girl is two weeks old; my mother was sponsor, together with an old grand-uncle of Louis's. We have called her Jeanne Athénaïs.

As soon as I am able I will pay you a visit at Chantepleurs, as you are not afraid of a wet-nurse, which is my present vocation. Your godson says your name; only he calls it *Matoumer*, for he cannot pronounce his c's. You'll dote on him. He has cut all his teeth, and eats meat like a big boy; and he runs about and thrusts his nose into everything like a rat. But I watch him always with anxious eyes; and I am in despair that I cannot have him with me during my confinement; the doctor insists on forty days in my room for the sake of certain precautions. Alas! my child, there's no such thing as getting accustomed to child-bearing. The same pains, the same apprehensions return.

My father thought Felipe thinner, and my dear darling also. And yet the Duc and Duchesse de Soria have left Paris, and you have no longer the slightest ground for jealousy. Are you hiding some trouble from me? Your letter was not as long nor as affectionately thought as usual. Perhaps, however, it is only a caprice of my dear capricious one.

I have written too much; my nurse is scolding me for writing at all, and Mademoiselle Athénaïs de l'Estorade wants her dinner. Adieu; write me one of your good long letters.

XLIII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

For the first time in my life, dear Renée, I have wept alone, under a willow, on a wooden bench, beside my long pond at Chantepleurs, - a delightful spot and view which you will embellish when you come, for the only thing wanting is joyous children. Your fruitfulness makes me think sadly of myself, who have no children after nearly three years of marriage. "Oh," I say in my heart, "if I had to suffer a hundred-fold more than Renée suffered in giving birth to my godson, even if I had to see my child in convulsions, grant, O God! that I have an angelic creature like that little Naïs - who I know is as beautiful as the day, though you did not tell me so. Ah! I recognize my Renée thereyou divined my sufferings. Each time that my hopes have failed me, I am for days a victim to the blackest grief. I sing dirges: When shall I embroider little caps? When shall I choose linen for my baby's clothes? When shall I sew the pretty laces to wrap a little head? Am I never to hear a haby creature call me mother, or feel it pull my gown and be my tyrant? Shall I see no traces of those little feet upon the sand, no broken toys about the house? Am I never to buy, as I watch many mothers buying, the coveted things, -

the sabres, dolls, the little tea-sets? And oh! shall I never see that life, that angel soul develop and be to me another Felipe, only more dear? Oh! I want a son to learn how to love a lover more in another himself.

Everything about me, my park, the château, seems deserted and drear. A woman without children is unnatural; we are made to be mothers. Oh! philosopher in petticoats that you are, you have seen life rightly. Barrenness is horrible in everything. My life is too like the sheepfolds of Gessner and Florian, in which Rivarol declared they longed for wolves.

I long to devote myself as you do! I feel within me powers which Felipe neglects; and if I am not to be a mother, fate must bring me some misfortune or some trial. I have just been saying that to my Spanish Moor, and the speech brought the tears to his eyes; however, I made it right by calling him a sublime goose; it won't do to joke about his love.

Sometimes I think I will make neuvaines, and pray for children to certain madonnas, or go to certain baths. Next winter I will consult the doctors. I am too furious against myself to tell you more just now. Adieu.

XLIV.

SAME TO SAME.

Paris, 1829.

'My dearest Renée, - Why have you left me a whole year without a letter? I am piqued. Do you think that your Louis (who comes to see me every other day) can take your place? It is not enough for me to know that you are well, and that all your affairs are satisfactory; I want your feelings and your ideas, just as I give you mine at the risk of being scolded, or blamed, or misunderstood, for I love you. Your silence and your burial in the country, when you might be here enjoying the parliamentary triumphs of the Comte de l'Estorade, (whose speechifyings and devotion have given him a great influence, and will place him very high before the session is over) make me uneasy. Do you spend your life writing him instructions? Numa did n't go so far from his Egeria. Why did n't you seize this occasion to come to Paris? I should have had you four months. Louis told me yesterday that you were coming to fetch him, and to be confined for the third time in Paris dreadful Mother Gigogne that you are!

After numberless questions and many sighs and plaints, Louis, though now diplomatic, ended by telling me that his great-uncle, the godfather of Athénaïs, was very ill. So I suppose that in your capacity as a good mother of a family you are making the most of the glory of your deputy to obtain a satisfactory legacy from his maternal relative. Well, we will look after your interests here. Don't be anxious, my Renée; the Lenoncourts, the Chaulieus, and the salon of Madame de Macumer are all at work for Louis. Martignac will probably put him in the Cour des Comptes.

But if you don't tell me what keeps you in the country I shall be angry. Is it to let no one find out that you are the mainspring and policy of the house of l'Estorade; or can it be for the uncle's legacy; or do you fear to be less a mother in Paris? Oh, how I would like to know whether it is that you don't want to be seen here for the first time in your present state. Oh, coquette!

Adien.

XLV.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

You complain of my silence; you forget the two little brown heads which I govern, and which govern me. Besides, you have discovered for yourself some of the reasons that keep me in the country.

In addition to my duty to our dear old uncle, I did not wish to drag a boy of four and a little girl almost

three to Paris, when I myself was again pregnant. I did not want to embarrass your life or your household with such a party, and - you are right enough - I shrank from appearing to my own disadvantage in the brilliant world in which you reign; and as for lodginghouses and hotels. I have a horror of them.

Louis's great-uncle, on hearing of his nephew's appointment, gave me half his savings, -- two hundred thousand francs, and told me to buy a house in Paris; and Louis has just been requested by him to look for one in your quarter. My mother gives me some thirty thousand francs with which to furnish it. So when I do go to Paris for a session it will be to my own home; where I shall endeavor to be worthy, in all sincerity be it said, of the sister of my choice.

I thank you for having placed Louis so favorably with the court; but in spite of the esteem shown for him by Messieurs de Bourmont and de Polignac, who want to have him in their ministry, I don't want him to be so conspicuous; a man is soon compromised in office. I prefer the position in the Cour des Comptes, which is irremovable. Our affairs here are in very good hands; as soon as our bailiff is quite accustomed to his work I shall go and second Louis; don't be afraid.

As for writing long letters, how can I? This one, in which I want to describe to you my every-day life, will 238

lie on my writing-table a week, I am very sure. Perhaps Armand will make it into tents for his army of tin soldiers drawn up on my carpet, or into ships for the fleet that sails his bath-tub.

One of my days will suffice to tell you all; they are precisely alike and are reduced to two events,—the children are ill, or the children are well. As for me, the simple fact is that in my solitary manor minutes are hours, or hours are minutes, according to the condition of the children. If I have some delightful hours it is after they are in bed, and I have finished rocking one or telling stories to the other to send them to sleep. When I know they are safely asleep beside me I say: "There! I 've nothing more to fear."

To tell the truth, my dearest, during the daytime all mothers invent dangers as soon as the children are out of sight. There are razors for Armand to play with, fire to catch his jacket, a slow-worm to bite him, a fall to bump his head, and ponds to tumble into. So you see that maternity is a series of poems, sweet or terrible as the case may be. There's not an hour which does not have its joys and fears.

But at night, in my room, comes the hour of waking dreams, when I settle their destinies. Their lives are then lighted by the smiles of angels hovering about their beds. Sometimes Armand calls me in his sleep; I stoop down to kiss his forehead or his sister's feet

and contemplate them both, lying there in their beauty. Those are my festivals! Last night our guardian angel (as I think) made me run from my bed to Naïs's crib. and there I found her with her head too low; and Armand in his, with his legs uncovered and violet with cold. "Ah, little mother!" he said, waking up and kissing me. There, my dear, is a night scene for yon.

How wise it is for a mother to have her children always beside her. Can any nurse, no matter how good she is, take them up and comfort them and put them to sleep again when waked by some nightmare as we can? For children do have bad dreams; and to explain one of them is all the more difficult because a child listens with an eye that is sleepy and scared, intelligent and idiotic, all at once; the moment is like an organ-rest between two sleeps. In consequence, my sleep has become so light that I see my little ones and hear them through the gauze of my eyelids. I wake at a sigh, a motion. The monster of convulsions is, for me, always crouching beside their beds.

At daylight the children's prattle begins with the first chirping of the birds. Through the veils of my last sleep their chattering sounds like the warblings at dawn, the disputes of the swallows, - little joyous or plaintive cries, which I hear less with my ears than my heart. While Nais tries to work her way from her crib to my bed by pulling herself along by her hands and taking tottering steps, Armand has clambered in like a monkey and is kissing me. Together they make my bed a playground, and the mother is at their mercy. The baby pulls my hair and still wants to suck, while Armand defends my breast as if it were his possession. I can't resist some of their attitudes and their pretty laughs, which explode like rockets. Then we play at ogres and the mother ogress devours with kisses the rosy flesh so soft and dewy, and the eyes so arch with mischief, and the pink shoulders,—which excites a world of little jealousies, all charming. Some days I begin to put on my stockings at eight o'clock, and they are not really on till nine.

Then, my dear, there's the getting up. Dressing begins. I slip on my wrapper, and turn up the sleeves, and put a waterproof apron in front of me; I bathe and I clean my two little flowers, with Mary's assistance. I alone am the judge of the warmth of the water, for the temperature of a bath counts for half in the cries and tears of children. Then come fleets of paper boats, and flocks of glass ducks; for children's minds must be amused if you want to clean them properly. If you only knew how many pleasures I have to invent for these autocrats in order to push a sponge into every nook and corner you would be

appalled at the cleverness and cunning a mother's trade requires, if accomplished triumphantly. I entreat and scold and promise; I am a humbug of the first water, and all the more because my wheedling has to be ingeniously concealed. No one knows how shrewd children are; God was forced to give the mother a little cunning. A child is a great politician, whom we master as we do a politician, — by his passions. Luckily, these angels find amusement in everything. A brush falls, the soap slips; thereupon gurgles of laughter.

Well, if the triumphs are dearly bought, they are triumphs. God alone (for the father knows nothing of all this) God and you and the angels alone know what looks I exchange with Mary when, after dressing our two little treasures, we behold them, both in perfect array, amid the combs and brushes and sponges and tubs and flannels and the thousand and one details of a nursery. I have become so English on this point that I admit the women of that country have a genius for raising children. Though they consider them solely from the point of view of material and physical wellbeing, they are right in their general system. My children shall always have their feet in flannel and their legs bare. They shall not be swathed and compressed; and never will I allow them to be left alone. imprisonment of French children in swaddling-clothes

means liberty for the nurse; there's the secret of them. A true mother is never at liberty, and that is why I have not written to you, — having on my hands the management of this estate, and two children to bring up.

The science of motherhood carries with it many a silent merit, ignored by all and without parade, - virtue . in small things, devotion at all hours. You don't think me a woman to withhold myself from a single care, do you? In the least of them there is some affection to be gleaned. Oh! it is so pretty to see a child's smile when he likes his little dinner. Armand has a way of nodding his head which is worth a whole lifetime of love. Why should I leave to another woman the care and pleasure of blowing on a spoonful of soup which Naïs thinks too hot, she whom I weaned at seven months but who still remembers the breast? When a nurse has burned the tongue and lips of a child with something hot she tells the mother it is hunger that makes it cry. To mince up a cutlet for Naïs (who has not vet got her last teeth) and mix it with potato is a work of patience; and really, it is only a mother who, in certain cases, can make an impatient child eat all the food he ought to take at a meal.

Ah! no, Louise, we must care for these dear innocents with our souls; we must trust our own eyes only, our own hands only in dressing them and feeding them

and putting them to sleep. A child's cry is just cause of blame to a mother or nurse, unless it proceeds from some illness ordained by nature. Since I have had two (and I shall soon have three) to care for I have had nothing in my soul but my children. Even you, whom I love so much, have been a memory to me. I am not always dressed by two o'clock. Therefore I say, don't trust the motherliness of mothers whose rooms and gowns and collars are in order.

I must tell you what happened yesterday. The day was so fine I wanted to take my cherubs for a last walk before my confinement, which is close at hand. Well, for a mother, this going out to walk is a poem, looked forward to from night till morn. Armand was to wear for the first time a black velvet jacket, a new collaret I had embroidered for him, and a Scotch cap of the Stuart tartan with a cock's feather. Nais was in pink and white, with a delicious baby-cap, — for she is still a baby, though she will soon lose that pretty name when the little one (whom I feel kicking me and whom I call my pauper, because he is the younger brother) comes into the world. I've seen him in my dreams, and I know he is a boy.

Well, caps and collars, jacket and stockings, dainty little shoes, pink garters for the legs, and the muslin frock embroidered in silk, were all laid out upon my bed. When these gay little birds who agree so well

had been duly brushed and curled (the hair of the baby softly bordering her pink and white cap), when the shoes were buttoned and the little naked legs skipped round the nursery, when the two "clean fuces" as Mary called them, and the sparkling eyes had cried out, "Come, let's go," I quivered and palpitated. Oh! to see that skin we have bathed and sponged ourselves, so fair and fresh with its pretty blue veins, heightened by contrast with the velvet or silk, — why, it is better than a poem! With what passion, never satisfied, do we call them to us for one more kiss on the little necks, prettier than those of the prettiest women! Those little scenes the vulgarest colored pictures of which all mothers stop to look at in the shop windows — I make them every day!

Once out-of-doors, I was proudly enjoying my labors, admiring my little Armand, who looked like the son of a prince and was leading the baby along that little road you remember near our house, when a carriage came by. I tried to draw them aside, and somehow they both tumbled into a mud-puddle, and there were my works of art, my masterpieces, destroyed! I snatched up the baby in my arms, not caring that I ruined my gown, and Mary laid hands on Armand, and we brought them home. When a baby cries and a child gets wet, that's enough; a mother can't think of herself, she is otherwise absorbed.

Dinner-time comes, and I have usually done nothing at all. How to serve both, to put on their napkins, turn up my cuffs, and feed the two is a problem I solve twice a day. As for me, I am the one neglected in the household; often, if the children have been naughty, I am still in curl-papers. My toilet depends on their good behavior. To have a moment to myself, in order to write you these six pages, I have let them cut pictures from my novels and build castles with my books and chequers and mother-of-pearl counters. Naïs is at this moment winding my wools to please herself, in so intricate a manner that she is giving all her little mind to it and does n't say a word.

After all, I have nothing to complain of; my children are robust and free, and they amuse themselves with much less trouble to me than you might think. They are pleased with everything. What they need is liberty, - properly watched, of course; they like that better than toys. A few colored pebbles, pink and yellow, purple or black, little shells, wonders in the sand, are their delight. To possess a great many small things appears to be their idea of wealth. I watch Armand: he talks to the flowers, the flies, the hens; he imitates them; he is on good terms with the insects, which fill him with admiration. All that is small interests them. Armand is beginning to ask the why of things. He came just now to see what I was saying to his godmother; he takes you for a fairy — there, see what intelligent minds children have!

Alas! my angel, I said I would not sadden you again with my happiness. One thing more I must tell you to paint your godson. The other day a poor man followed us; for the poor know well that no mother accompanied by her child ever denies them alms. Armand does not yet know that any one can want for bread; he is ignorant of what money is, but as he had wished for a trumpet and I had just bought him one, he held it out to the old man saying:—

- " Here, take that."
- "Will you permit me to keep it?" said the poor man looking at me.

What is there on earth that could be put into the balance with my joy at that moment?

"You see, madame, I have children, too," said the old man, taking the alms I gave him, without even looking at them.

When I reflect that I must soon put a child like Armand to school, that I have only three and a half years more to keep him with me, I cannot help trembling. A public school will mow down the flowers of this blessed childhood; it will denaturalize those graces, crush that adorable frankness! They will cut the pretty curls I have so bathed and cleaned and kissed. But what will they do with Armand's soul?

Enough! let me turn to you. What has become of you? You tell me nothing of your life. Do you love Felipe as before? As for the Saracen himself, I am not uneasy about his love. Adieu; Naïs has just tumbled down; if I wished to continue that drama this letter would be a volume.

XLVI.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

CHANTEPLEURS, 1829

The newspapers will have told you, my good and tender Renée, of the terrible misfortune which has befallen me. I could not write to you. I remained at his bedside for twenty nights and days; I closed his eyes; I watched his body with the priests; I said the prayers for the dead. I inflicted upon myself the chastisement of these awful sufferings; and yet, when I saw upon those lips serene the smile he gave me just before he died I could not believe that my love had killed him. But he is not, and I, I am! To you who knew us both what can I tell you more? All is in those two sentences.

Oh! if any one would tell me he could be recalled to life, I would give my hopes of heaven to hear the words — for I should see him! To clasp him once

would let me breathe, if only for a single instant, without this dagger in my heart.

Will you not come and tell me that? Do you not love me enough to deceive me? But, no, no! you told me beforehand that I was cruelly injuring him. Was it true? Yes, I did not deserve his love; you were right; I stole it. Happiness! I choked it in my mad embrace. Oh! writing to you now, I am not mad. but I feel myself alone. O God, what is there in thy hell beyond that word?

When they took him from me I laid myself down in his bed, hoping to die there; for there was but a door between us, and I thought I had power to open it. But alas! I was too young; and after an illness of forty days, during which they fed me with those frightful appliances of a dreary science, I was brought to Chantepleurs, where I now am, sitting at my window, among the flowers he planted for me, before that glorious view on which his eyes so often wandered rejoicing in the thought that he had discovered it because it pleased me! Ah, dearest, the pain of changing one's abode when the heart is dead is dreadful. The damp soil of my garden makes me shudder; the earth is like a vast grave, and I fancy I am walking over him. When I first went out I was afraid of it, and stood motionless. Oh, it is so dreary to see his flowers without him.

My mother and father are both in Spain; you know what my brothers are; and you yourself are obliged to stay at La Crampade; but do not be uneasy, two angels have come to me. The Duc and Duchesse de Soria, those dear beings, came instantly to their brother. During the last nights our three griefs were calm and silent around the bed where one of those rare men who are truly noble, truly grand, and superior to us in all things, lay dying. His patience was divine. The sight of his brother and Marie revived his soul for a moment and calmed his sufferings.

"Dear," he said to me, with that simplicity he showed in all things, "I was about to die forgetting to give Fernando the barony of Macumer. I must make another will. My brother will forgive this want of thought, for he knows what it is to love."

I owe my life to the care of my brother-in-law and his wife; they want to take me back with them to Spain.

Ah! Renée, to you alone can I tell the whole truth of this disaster. The sense of my wrong-doing crushes me; it is a bitter consolation to confess it to you, — poor, unheeded Cassandra! I killed him by my exactions, my groundless jealousies, my perpetual controversies. My love was the more terrible in its effects because we both had the same extreme sensitiveness; we spoke the same soul language; he felt everything

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intensely, and often my jesting, unawares to me, cut him to the heart. You cannot imagine to what lengths that dear slave carried his obedience. Sometimes I would tell him to go away and leave me alone, and he would go without discussing a caprice from which, perhaps, he suffered. To his last breath he blessed me; repeating that a single morning alone with me was more to him than a long life with any other beloved woman, were it even Marie Heredia. I weep as I write these words.

I rise at mid-day, I go to bed at seven in the evening, I spend an unconscionable time at my meals, I walk slowly, I stop an hour before some plant, I gaze at the foliage, I busy myself deliberately and gravely about trifles, I love shade and silence and the darkness, I struggle through the hours and add them one by one with gloomy pleasure to the past. The quiet of my park is the only companionship I wish for; there I find the glorious images of my buried happiness, invisible to others, living and eloquent to me.

My sister-in-law flung herself into my arms when I said to her one morning:—

"I cannot endure your presence any longer! Spaniards have something grander than we have in their souls!"

Ah! Renée, if I am not dead it is that God no doubt apportions our sense of misery to our strength.

None but women know the extent of our loss when we lose a love without one taint of hypocrisy, the love of our choice, a lasting passion whose pleasures satisfied both soul and nature. How often is it granted to women to meet a man with such high qualities that they can love him and not degrade themselves? To meet him is the greatest joy that can come to women; it can come to them only once. Men truly great and strong, you in whom virtue hides beneath poesy, you whose souls possess a lofty charm, men made to be adored, keep yourselves from loving, or you will cause the misery of a woman and your own!

That is what I cry aloud in my wood-paths. And no child by him! That unquenchable love that smiled upon me ever, a love that showered only flowers and bliss upon me, that love to be barren! I am an accursed creature. Must love, pure and violent as it is when absolute, be as unfruitful as aversion, - just as the heated sands of the desert and the frozen region of the pole produce no life? Must one marry a de l'Estorade to have a family? Is God displeased with love? Oh! what am I saying?

You are the only being I can endure beside me. Come to me; you alone should be with your Louise in mourning. What a horrible day that was when I put a widow's cap upon my head! When I saw myself in black, the emblem of my life, I fell upon a seat and wept till night. I weep still as I tell you of that moment.

Adieu; writing fatigues me. I am weary of my thoughts; I cannot any longer express them. Bring your children; you can nurse the last one here. There is no jealousy now; he is gone, and my godson will be a pleasure to me; Felipe longed for a child which should be like our little Armand. Yes, Renée, come and take your share in my grief.

XLVII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME DE MACUMER.

1829.

Dearest, when you hold this letter in your hand I shall not be far off, for I start almost directly after dispatching it. We shall be alone. Louis is obliged to remain in Provence on account of the elections which are about to take place; he wants to be re-elected, and schemes are already laid against him by the liberals.

I do not come to console you; I bring only my heart to bear company with yours and help you, if I can, to live: I come to bid you weep; thus you will buy the happiness of rejoining him; he is only gone to God, and every step you take will lead you to him; each duty

done shortens by one link the chain that parts you. Ah! my Louise, you will yet arise and go to him, pure and noble, — forgiven for your involuntary faults, and followed by the works that you will do in his name here below.

I write these lines in haste in the midst of preparations; Armand is crying out: "Godmother! godmother! we are going to see her!" He makes me jealous; he is half your son.

SECOND PART.

XLVIII.

MADAME DE MACUMER TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

October 15, 1833.

Well, yes, Renée, they have told you the truth, or partly the truth. I have sold my house in Paris, I have sold Chantepleurs and the farms in the Seine-et-Marne; but I am not crazy, and not ruined; as I will show you in figures.

After that fatal blow which broke the mainspring of my life, I possessed the fortune of my poor Macumer, — some twelve hundred thousand francs. I shall now render you, as a trusted sister, a faithful account of it. I put a million into the Three-per-cents when they were at fifty, and I thus gained an income of sixty thousand francs instead of thirty thousand, which was all I could get from landed property. To spend six months of the year in the country, looking after leases, listening to the complaints of farmers (who will pay their rents only when they choose); to be bored to death, like a sportsman, on rainy days; to have crops to sell

and let them go at a loss; to live in Paris in a house that represents ten thousand francs a year; to keep my funds with a notary, and worry about interest; to sue people who don't pay, and study the law of mortgages,—in short, to have business matters in Nivernais, Seine-et-Marne, and Paris,—what a burden, what a bore, and above all, what mistakes and losses would result for a widow only twenty-seven years old!

Now my fortune is secured on the budget. Instead of paying taxes to the State, I receive from it, without costs, thirty thousand francs every six months, paid at the Treasury by a smiling little clerk, who gives me thirty bank-notes of a thousand francs each. "Suppose France becomes bankrupt?" I hear you say. In the first place, I never take woes ahead. But even so, France could only cut off half my income; I should be as well-off as I was before I made the investment. Such catastrophes happen only once in a century, and that leaves me plenty of time to make another fortune by economy. Besides, is n't the Comte de l'Estorade a peer of the semi-republican France of July? Is n't he one of the supporters of the crown offered by the people to the King of the French? Need I be anxious when I have for my friend a president of the Cour des Comptes?

Who dares say now that I am crazy? I can calculate almost as well as your citizen-king. But do you know what gives algebraic wisdom to a woman? — Love.

Alas! the moment has come when I must explain to you the mysteries of my conduct, the motives of which have eluded your perspicacity, your inquisitive affection, and your cleverness. I am about to be married, privately, in a village near Paris. I love, and I am loved. I love as much as a woman who knows what love is can love. I am loved as much as a man should love the woman who adores him.

Forgive me, Renée, for concealing the truth from you as well as from all the world. If your Louise has deceived all eyes and misled all inquiry, you, at least, will admit that my passion for my poor Macumer demanded that secrecy. Besides, you and l'Estorade would have harassed me with doubts, bewildered me with remonstrances. Even circumstances might have helped you. You alone know the point to which I can be jealous, and you might have uselessly tortured me.

What you will now call my folly, Renée, I was determined to do alone, out of my own head, my own heart, like a young girl who escapes the watchfulness of her parents. My lover's fortune is thirty thousand francs' worth of debts, which I have paid. What a topic for your remarks! You would have proved to me that Gaston was a sharper, and your husband would have spied upon him. I preferred to do the spying myself.

It is now twenty-two months since he first courted

me. I am twenty-seven, he is twenty-three. Between a woman who is the elder and a man, this difference is enormous. Another cause, you would say, of unhappiness! Also he is a poet, and lives by his work, — which is as good as telling you he lives on next to nothing. This dear lizard of a poet is oftener in the sun, building his castles in the air, than in his underground lair writing poems. Writers, artists, all those who exist by thought only, are usually taxed with inconstancy by practical persons. They espouse and conceive so many fancies that it is natural to suppose that their heads react upon their hearts.

But, in spite of the paid debts, in spite of the difference of age, in spite of the poesy, after nine months of a gallant struggle, and without so much as having let him kiss my hand — after the purest and most delicious courtship, I give myself; I do not yield myself passively as I did eight years ago, ignorant and inexperienced; I give myself, and the gift is accepted with such submission that I might even delay another year before the marriage takes place. But there is not the least servility in this; there is deference in it, but not submission. Never did I meet a nobler heart, nor more of strength in tenderness, nor more of soul in love than in my beloved. Alas! my Renée, it comes to him by nature. Let me tell you his history in two words.

My lover has no other name than that of Marie Gaston. He is the natural son of that beautiful Lady Brandon, of whom you must have heard, who died near Tours, at La Grénadière, killed by grief caused by the vengeance of Lady Dudley, - a horrible history, of which her son knows nothing. Marie Gaston was placed by his brother Louis Gaston at school in Tours, where he stayed till 1827. Soon after placing him there his brother went to sea to seek his fortune: so an old woman who has been Marie's Providence assured him. Louis, then in the navy, wrote to him from different ports letters that were truly fatherly, - the letters of a noble soul; but he never returned to France. last letter he told Marie Gaston of his promotion to the rank of post-captain in some American republic, I don't remember which, and exhorted him to hope. Alas! for three years my poor poet has received no further letter, and he loves his brother so much that he wanted at first to go in search of him. But our great writer, Daniel d'Arthèz, has prevented such folly, and has interested himself deeply in Marie Gaston, to whom he has often given, as my poet says in his picturesque language, "the bite and sup."

Judge, now, of the lad's distress; he imagined that genius was the surest and most rapid means of fortune! That will surely make you laugh for twenty-four hours. From 1828 to 1833 he has been trying to win for himself

a name in letters, and he has consequently led a most frightful life of anguish, hope, toil, and starvation. Led on by his extreme ambition, against the wiser counsels of his friend d'Arthèz, he only managed to roll up the snowball of his debts. His name was beginning to be known when I chanced to meet him at Madame d'Espard's. There, without a thought of such a thing entering his mind, I felt drawn to love him, sympathetically, at first sight. Why has no one loved him already? Why is he left for me? I asked myself. Oh, he has genius and intellect, heart and pride, — it must be that women are afraid of greatness so complete! Did it not take a hundred victories to show Josephine a Napoleon in the little Bonaparte, her husband?

His innocent heart thinks it knows how much I love him! Poor Gaston! he has no conception of it. But to you I will tell it; you ought to know it, for, Renée, this letter is, as it were, my will and testament. Meditate on what I say.

At this moment I have the certainty of being loved as much as a woman can be loved upon this earth; and I have faith in this conjugal life to which I bring a love I never felt before. Yes, I know at last the pleasure of returning a passion. What all women ask of love, marriage will give me. I feel for Gaston the passion I inspired in my poor Felipe. I am no longer mistress of myself; I tremble before that child as Felipe

trembled before me. In short, I love more than I am loved; I am afraid of everything; my fears are ridiculous; I fear to be deserted; I tremble lest I be old and ugly while Gaston is still young and handsome; I tremble at the thought that I may not please him always. And yet I think I possess the faculties, the devotion, the sense necessary, not to preserve only, but also to nurture and increase his love, if far from the world, in solitude: That is my dream.

If I fail, if the magnificent poem of this secret love should have an end — what am I saying, an end! — nay, if Gaston loves me one day less than the day before, and I perceive it, Renée, remember, I shall blame myself, not him. It will not be his fault; it will be mine. I know myself. I am more of a loving woman than a mother; and I tell you in advance that if this happened to me I should die, even though I might have children. And before I enter into these new bonds, my Renée, I implore you, should any evil come to me, to be a mother to my children; I here bequeath them to you. The knowledge of your fanaticism for duty, your precious qualities, your love for children, your love for me, — all that I know of you will render death less bitter; I dare not say more sweet.

This fixed idea within my mind adds a nameless terror to the ceremony of this marriage; that is why I cannot have those who know me witness it; it will be

solemnized in secret. I can tremble more at ease if I do not see in your dear eyes a disquietude I cannot bear. I alone shall feel, as I sign this second register of marriage, that I may have signed my death-warrant.

I shall never speak again of the pact now made between myself and the self I am going to become. I confide it to you here, that you may know, if evil happens to me, the extent of the duty I lay upon you.

I marry free, absolutely independent as to property, and knowing that I am rich enough for us both to live at our ease, I can dispose of my fortune in what manner I choose. As I do not wish to humiliate either of us, I have placed twelve thousand francs a year in Gaston's name; he will find the first year's income in his desk the evening before our marriage, and if he does not accept them I will suspend everything. I was obliged to threaten not to marry him to obtain the right to pay his debts.

Ah! Renée, I am weary with writing to you all these confessions. Day after to-morrow I will tell you more; but to-morrow I am obliged to go into the country for the whole day.

October 20th

I have taken measures to hide my happiness, for I desire to evade all occasions for my fatal jealousy. I am like that beautiful Italian princess who rushed to Switzerland to devour her prey after springing upon it

like a lioness. So, though I am now going to tell you of all my arrangements, I beg of you not to come and see us unless I ask you to do so; and to respect the seclusion in which I wish to live.

About two years ago I bought some twenty acres of meadow land, with a fringe of woods and a fine fruit-garden, above the ponds of Ville d'Avray, on the road to Versailles. At the lower end of the meadows the ground has been excavated so as to form a pond about three acres in extent, in the middle of which is an island gracefully outlined. Two pretty wooded hills close in this valley and send delicious little brooks to filter through my park, where they have been judiciously distributed by my architect. These waters fall into the ponds on the crown lands which can be seen through an opening in the trees. The park, admirably laid out by the same architect, is, according to the nature of the land, enclosed by hedges, walls, and sunken fences, so that no point of view is lost. Half way up the slope, at a spot flanked by the woods of La Ronce, with a delightful prospect, facing a meadow running down to the pond, I have built a chalet, the exterior of which exactly reproduces that on the road from Sion to Brieg which so delighted me on our way back from Italy. Within, its elegance surpasses that of all the famous chalets.

About a hundred yards from this rustic dwelling is

a charming construction which groups together the kitchen, offices, stables, and coach-houses, and communicates with the Chalet by an underground way. Of all these various buildings, made of brick, the eye sees only a façade of graceful simplicity, surrounded by shrubs and trees. The gardener's house is another ornamental building, which masks the entrance to the orchard and kitchen-gardens.

The entrance gate to this property, in the wall on the woodland side, is almost undiscoverable. The plantations, already of some height, will completely hide the buildings in a few years; my idea of retirement will be completely carried out; passers along the roads will know of our abode only by the smoke rising above the trees in summer, or in winter when the leaves have fallen.

The Chalet stands in the midst of grounds designed after those they call the "King's Garden" at Versailles; but it has, in addition, a view of my pond and island. On all sides the hill-slopes show their foliage, the foliage of the fine trees now so cared for by the new Civil list. My gardeners have orders to cultivate only the sweetest-smelling flowers, and those by thousands; so that this little corner of the earth will be a perfumed emerald. The Chalet, adorned with a wild grape-vine which clambers over the roof, is literally swathed in climbing plants, clematis, jasmine, hop, and cobea. He

who can distinguish our windows amid their luxuriance may boast of having seen a rare sight!

This chalet, my dear, is a good and fine house, with its calorifères and all the improvements introduced by modern architecture, — which nowadays builds palaces on a hundred square feet of ground. It contains a suite of rooms for Gaston and a suite of rooms for me. The ground-floor is occupied by an antechamber, a parlor, and a dining-room. Above us are three rooms destined for the nursery. I have five superb horses, a little coupé, very light, and a milord for two horses. We are less than forty minutes from Paris; and if we want to hear an opera, or see a new piece at the theatres, we have only to drive in after dinner and return to our nest at night. The road is fine and runs under the shadow of our own woods for some distance.

My servants, the cook, coachman, groom, gardeners, and the lady's-maid are all worthy persons, who will be under the direction of my good old Philippe. Though I think I may be sure of their discretion, I hold them partly by their interests; their wages are small, with the promise of an increase each year by a new-year's gift. They all know that the slightest fault, or the mere suspicion of their being indiscreet, would cause them to lose immense advantages. Loving persons never worry their servants, —they are indulgent; and so I think I may rely on my people.

All that was precious, and beautiful, and elegant in my house in the rue du Bac, is now in the Chalet. The Rembrandt (which is neither more nor less than a daub) is on the staircase; the Hobbema is in his study, opposite to the Rubens; the Titian which my sister-in-law sent me from Madrid, adorns the boudoir; those beautiful pieces of furniture Felipe found look well in the parlor, which the architect has decorated exquisitely. Everything about the Chalet is charming, — simple with the simplicity that costs a fortune. The ground-floor, being built over a cellar with stone foundation-walls laid in cement, and scarcely visible behind the plants and shrubs, is delightfully cool but never damp. A flock of white swans are floating on the pond at the foot of the lawn.

Oh, Renée! a silence to rejoice the dead reigns in this valley. We shall be wakened by the song of birds, or the shivering of the poplars to the breeze. A little brook comes down the hillside and runs to the pond over silvery sands between banks of water-cress; I don't know that any money could have bought that! But oh! will Gaston think these charms are too complete and so dislike them? All is so beautiful that I tremble at it; worms are in the finest fruits, insects attack the loveliest flowers! It is always the pride of the forest those horrible brown larvæ gnaw with a voracity like that of death. I know already by experi-

ence that an invisible and jealous power undermines all perfect felicity. How many times you have told me so! You were a prophet.

Yesterday, when I went to see if my last fancies and ideas had been thoroughly understood and carried out, tears came into my eyes at such perfection, and I wrote at the foot of the architect's account (to his great surprise) "Correct; pay at once."

"But your man of business will not pay it in that way, madame," he said. "It is a matter of three hundred thousand francs."

So I added the words "without discussion," like a true Chaulieu of the seventeenth century.

"But, monsieur," I said, "I make one condition; do not speak of these buildings or of the park to any one. No one knows me here, even by name, and I put you on your honor to observe my wishes in this respect."

Now you understand the meaning of all my sudden movements, and my secret comings and goings. You see now where my beautiful things that rumor told you were sold have gone. Will you admit the lofty reason of this change in my life? Dear, to love is a great business, and whoso would love well must have no other. I have simplified all others; money can never be a care to me now. I have made life easy; I have so arranged my household once for all that I shall have no care except perhaps for ten minutes every morning

with my major-domo, old Philippe. I have studied life and its dangerous whirlpools; death taught me one fatal day a cruel lesson, and I mean to profit by it. My sole occupation shall be to please him, to love him, and to put variety into what might seem a monotonous existence to common souls.

Gaston knows nothing of all this as yet. At my request he has made himself (and so have I) a resident of Ville d'Avray. To-morrow we start for the Chalet. Our life there will not be costly; though, if I were to tell you the sum at which I estimate my toilet you would say, and not without reason, "She is mad!" I wish to adorn myself for him, every day, as other women adorn themselves for society. My toilet in this country solitude will therefore cost, for the whole year, twenty-four thousand francs. He may wear blouses if he likes. Don't think I mean to make this life a duel, and to exhaust myself in efforts and contrivances to retain love; no, but I will not leave anything unguarded for which I could blame myself, that is all. I have thirteen years still before me in which to be a pretty woman; I wish to be loved to the last day of the thirteenth year even more than I shall be on the morrow of my mysterious marriage. This time I will be humble, grateful; no caustic word shall escape me: I will make myself a servant, -- for power and command it was that ruined me that first time.

Oh, Renée! if, like me, Gaston has understood the infinitude of love I am certain of living ever happy. Nature is so lovely around the Chalet; the woods are ravishing. At every turn a dewy landscape, or woodland scenes which refresh the soul with their sweet ideas. These woods are full of love. God grant I may not have made myself a pyre with them! Tomorrow I shall be Madame Gaston. I ask my soul if it is Christian to love a man so much.

"It is legal," said my notary (who is to be my witness to-morrow) referring to the liquidation of my property; and then he added: "But I lose a client." And you, my beautiful Renée, — I dare not still say my dearest, — you may well say: "I lose a sister."

Address your letters in future to "Madame Gaston, poste restante, Versailles." We shall send there for our letters every day; and all our provisions are to come from Paris; so I hope we shall be able to live in absolute retirement. During the year the place has been preparing no one has set foot there; the purchase was made during the public excitement which followed the revolution of July, and it thus escaped notice.

Adieu. In writing that word I have as much pain as I have pleasure in my heart; does not that mean that I regret you as profoundly as I love Gaston?

XLIX

M. MARIE GASTON TO M. DANIEL D'ARTHÈZ.

October, 1833.

My DEAR DANIEL, - I want two witnesses for my marriage, and I beg you to come to me to-morrow evening and bring with you our friend, the good and great Joseph Bridau. The intention of the lady who will be my wife is to live remote from society, in perfect solitude: in this she has foreseen my most ardent wishes. You have known nothing of my love, - you who softened the woes of my poverty-stricken life, but I know you will feel that this secrecy must have been a necessity. This is why, for the last year, you have seen me so seldom. After my marriage we shall be separated for a long time. Daniel, you have a soul able to understand me; friendship cannot exist without the friend. Perhaps I shall sometimes feel the need of you, but I cannot see you, in my own house at least. In this respect She has gone even beyond my desires. She has sacrificed to me and to our solitude the friend of her childhood, who has been a true sister to her; in return I immolate my friend.

All this will make you perceive, not a passion, but a true love, — complete, divine, founded on an intimate knowledge between two beings who link themselves

together. My happiness is pure, and it is infinite; but as some secret law forbids us to enjoy unmingled happiness, there lurks in the depths of my heart a thought which troubles me alone, for she knows nothing of it. You know the dreadful situation I was once in, for you have often helped me in it. Where and how did I get courage to live when hope was overthrown so often? From your past life, my friend, - from you, in whom I found such true consolation, such delicate relief. But now, She has paid my crushing debts. She is rich, and I have nothing. How often have I said in my lazy moments, "Ah! if any rich woman would only take a fancy to me!" Well, in presence of that accomplished fact, the heedless jest of the boy, the actual scheme of many an unscrupulous pauper, takes another aspect; I am humiliated in spite of the nobility of her soul - of which I am sure. Moreover, she has seen that I did not recoil from that abasement. A point is reached where, instead of being a protector, I am the protected one.

I confide that suffering to you, my dear Daniel, but outside of that point, let me hasten to say, all things are far beyond my dreams. I have found the Beautiful without a flaw, the Good without defect. As the saying is, the bride is too enchanting; she has intelligence in her tenderness, and the charm and grace which give variety to love; she is educated and under-

stands all topics; she is pretty, fair, and lithe, but plump as well; one might say that Raffaelle and Rubens had conspired to produce such a woman. I don't know if it would have been possible for me to love a dark woman as much as a fair one; for dark women always seem to me half boys. She is a widow, and has no children. Though eager, alert, and indefatigable, she nevertheless finds pleasure in melancholy meditations. These diverse gifts do not exclude in her either dignity or nobility of manner; she is imposing. Though she belongs to one of the oldest of our noble families, she loves me enough to overlook the misfortunes of my birth.

Our secret love has lasted long; we have tested one-another thoroughly; we are each jealous; our thoughts are like two flashes from one thunderclap; we both love for the first time; and this delicious spring-time holds in its joys all that imagination can conceive of happiness. Each day is full to overflowing, and when we part we write poems to each other. I have never once thought of tarnishing this beautiful season of our love with desires, though my soul is filled with them. She was a widow and free, and she has thoroughly understood the flattery of this restraint; she is sometimes touched to tears. You will see in her to-morrow, my dear Daniel, a really superior being. Not a kiss of love has there been between us; we have mutually been in awe of one another.

- "We have each," she said to me, "a grievous thing in our lives to overlook."
 - "I do not see yours."
 - "My marriage," she answered.

You, who are a great man, and who love one of the most distinguished women in that aristocratic world in which I found my Armande, will comprehend that speech; it will suffice you to understand her soul, and what will be the happiness of

Your friend,

MARIE GASTON.

L.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

OH, Louise, can it be that after all your experience of the misfortunes of exclusive love, you mean to bury yourself with a husband in solitude? After declaring that you killed one by exactions in the world, do you really mean to live apart from the world to devour another? What griefs you are preparing for yourself! But from the way you have set about the matter I see it is irrevocable. A man who has made you overcome your aversion to second marriages must be angelic in mind and divine in heart; and I ought, therefore, not to meddle with your illusions. You are happy in your belief in happiness, and I have not the heart to blame

you, though the instinct of my tenderness would have made me try to turn you from this marriage, had I known of it in time. Yes, a hundred times yes, nature and society combine to destroy the existence of unalloyed happiness; because such happiness runs counter to nature and society, - perhaps, too, heaven is jealous of its rights. At any rate, if you persist in burying yourself with your love, and living exclusively for that, my friendship foresees some misfortune, the nature of which I am unable to prophesy, not knowing whence it may come nor what will give birth to it. Besides, dearest, I am sure so vast and boundless a happiness will be too much for you to bear indefinitely; excessive joy is even more exhausting than the heaviest burden. I don't say anything against him; you love him, and that's enough; but I do hope you will write to me, some day when you have nothing to do, and give me a full description of this beautiful and rare "animal."

You see I take the matter gayly; the fact is, I feel certain that when the honeymoon is well over you will both with one accord settle down, and do as other people do. Some day, say two years hence, when you and I are driving together on the road to Versailles, you will say to me: "There's the chalet I said I would never leave!" and then you'll laugh your own good laugh, and show all your pretty teeth.

I have not told Louis as yet; and I shall not tell him

all, for I am afraid it would make him laugh. I shall simply tell him of your marriage and your wish to keep it secret for the present. Here it is October; you are a brave woman to face the winter in the country; if it did not concern marriage I should say you were taking the bull by the horns. Rest assured that you have in me a friend who will be both discreet and intelligent. The mysterious centre of Africa has swallowed up many a traveller, and it seems to me that, in the matter of sentiment, you are rushing into a journey like that of so many explorers who have lost their lives either through the natives or the burning sands. Happily, your Africa is only six miles from Paris, so I gayly say to you: "Bon voyage! we shall see you back soon."

LI.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

Paris, 1835.

What has become of you, dear Louise? After a silence of two years surely your Renée has a right to make inquiries. Is this love? Does it necessitate the annulling of a friendship like ours? Admit that if I adore my children even more than you love your Gaston, there is in that maternal sentiment a breadth and grandeur

which does not allow of depriving other affections of their due, but, on the contrary, leaves a woman free to be a sincere and devoted friend. Your letters, your dear sweet face, are sorely lacking to me. I am reduced to conjectures about you. Oh, Louise!

As for ourselves, I will run over our events as succinctly as possible.

In re-reading your last letter but one I was struck with a few sharp words about our political position. You twitted us with having kept the presidency of the Cour des Comptes, which, as you observed, we hold, together with the title of count, through the favor of Charles X. But if we had only our patrimonial income to depend upon how could I, with only forty thousand francs a year (thirty of which are entailed with the property), - how could I establish Athénaïs and my poor little "pauper" René? Ought we not to live on the salary of the post, and lay by the income from the estate? In twenty years we can amass nearly six hundred thousand francs, which will serve to dower my daughter and provide for René, whom I mean to put into the navy. The little papper will thus have ten thousand francs a year, and possibly we might be able to leave him a sum in hand equal to his sister's portion. When he is a post-captain he will be able to marry a rich girl and perhaps hold as good a position in the world as his elder brother.

These sage calculations made us resolve in our own minds to accept the new order of things. Naturally, the new dynasty in return made Louis a peer of France and a grand officer of the Legion of honor. As soon as l'Estorade took the oaths, he could not, and ought not to do the thing by halves; from that time therefore he has rendered great services in the Chamber. He has now reached a position in which he can tranquilly remain to the end of his days. He has dexterity in public business; he is more of a debater than an orator, but that is all that is needed of him. His shrewdness, and his sound knowledge, both in questions of government policy and in matters of administration, are appreciated, and all parties now regard him as an indispensable man. I may tell you privately that an embassy was lately offered to him: but I made him decline it. The education of Armand, who is now thirteen, and Athénaïs, who is nearly eleven, keeps me in Paris, and I want to stay here till my little René has finished his, which is only beginning.

To continue faithful to the Elder Branch and live on the estate would not have enabled me to educate my children and provide for the two youngest. A mother, my dearest, can't be a Decius, — especially in times when Deciuses are rare. Fifteen years from now l'Estorade can retire to La Crampade with a handsome pension, after installing Armand as referendary in the Cour des Comptes. As for René, the navy will no doubt lead him into diplomacy; at seven years old the little monkey is as shrewd as an old cardinal.

Ah! Louise, I am a very happy mother. My children continue to give me joys without a cloud, - Senza brama, sicura ricchezza. Armand is in the Collège Henri IV. I decided on public education without being able to bring myself to a total separation from him; I did therefore as the Duc d'Orléans did before becoming — possibly in order to be — Louis Philippe. Every morning Lucas (the old servant, whom you will remember) takes Armand to school, and fetches him at halfpast four in the afternoon. An old and excellent tutor who lives in our house makes him learn his lessons at night, and wakes him in the morning in time for school. Lucas takes him his lunch during the recreation. I see him at dinner, and in the evening before he goes to bed, and I always see him off in the morning. He is the same charming child, full of heart and devotion, whom you loved; his tutor is satisfied with him. I have my Naïs and the little one with me; they keep up an incessant buzzing, but I am just as much of a child as they. I could not force myself to give up my dear children's presence and caresses. I can now rush to Armand's bed, if I so please, and look at him as he sleeps; and, to tell the truth, to take and give a kiss to that angel is a necessity of my existence.

Still, the system of keeping children at home has its disadvantages; I fully recognize them. Society, like nature, is jealous, and will not allow her laws to be infringed upon; she does not choose to have her system of economy upset. Therefore, in those families where children are kept at home they are too early exposed to the fire of the world, they see its passions and its dissimulations. Incapable of even guessing the distinctions which guide the conduct of grown persons, they subject life to their feelings and passions, instead of subjecting their desires and requirements to the world. Children are soon taken by false brilliancy, which shines very much more in society than solid virtues; for it is appearances, above all, which society brings to the front, and clothes in lying garments. When a lad of fifteen assumes the assurance of a man who knows the world, he is a monstrosity; he is an old man at twenty-five, and renders himself by that precocious knowledge incapable of the solid studies on which real and serious talents rest. The world is a great comedian, and, like a comedian, it receives and returns all; it keeps nothing. A mother therefore must, if she keeps her children at home, make a firm resolution not to allow them to enter the world: she must have the courage to oppose their desires, and her own, in this matter. Cornelia kept her jewels in their casket; and so shall I, for my children are my life.

I am thirty years old, and the heat of the day is over, the hardest part of the journey done. In a few years I shall be an old woman, and I shall find immense strength in the feeling of having done my duty. One would really think my three dear beings understood this thought of mine and conformed to it. There exist between them (who have never left my side) and me mysterious relations. They shower enjoyments upon me as if they knew all that they owe me in the way of compensation.

Armand, who for the first three years of his studies, was heavy, meditative, and caused me some anxiety, suddenly took a start. No doubt he began to perceive the object of preparatory studies, which children do not always see, and which is, in fact, to train them to study, to sharpen their intelligence, and mould them to obedience, - the mainspring of society. My dear, a few days ago I had the intoxicating sensation of seeing Armand before a great audience at the Sorbonne. At the distribution of prizes at the Collège Henri IV, he obtained two first prizes, that for verses and that for theme. I turned white when I heard his name called. and I longed to cry out, "I am his mother!" Naïs squeezed my hand till she hurt me, if indeed I could feel anything at such a moment. Ah! Louise, that grand day was better than all the lost loves in the world.

The triumphs of his brother have spurred on my little René, who wants to go to school like his elder. Sometimes the three children shout and rush about the house and make a racket fit to split one's head. I am sure I don't know how I bear it, for I am always there. I have never left to any one, not even to Mary, the responsibility of watching over them. But there are so many joys to garner in this dear business of motherhood! To see a child leave its play just to run up and kiss you, as if driven by a need - oh! what joy! We can observe them best in their freest moments, for one of a mother's chief duties is to distinguish from the earliest years the aptitudes and character and vocation of her children. All children brought up by their mothers have a knowledge of customs and ways of life which serves as a substitute for natural intelligence, whereas natural intelligence never takes the place of what men learn from their mothers. I recognize these shades of difference in the men I meet in salons, where I can detect instantly the traces of a woman in the manners of a young man. How therefore can women deprive their sous of such an advantage? So, you see, my duties, if accomplished, are fruitful of treasures and joys.

Armand, I am convinced, will make an honest and upright public man, the most conscientious deputy that could be found anywhere; whereas my René will

be the boldest, most adventurous, and at the same time the wiliest of sailors. The little scamp has an iron will; he gets everything he wants, and he makes a thousand twists and turns to reach his end; if a thousand won't do it he invents a thousand and one, or more, until he does reach it. Where my dear Armand would resign himself calmly and see the reason of things, René storms, strives, plans, — haranguing all the time, — and ends by finding a crack of vantage; if he can get but the point of his knife into it he presently drives through in his little chariot.

As for Naïs, she is so much myself that I hardly distinguish her flesh from mine. Ah! the darling! the dear little girl! whom I love to make dainty and sweet; whose hair I braid, in whose curls I put my thoughts of love. I want her to be happy; I will give her to no man whom she does not love and who will not love her. But - oh, my God! sometimes when Iam decking my darling with ribbons in her hair, or tying the shoes on her dainty little feet, a thought darts into my heart and head which turns me faint. Who is mistress of the fate of a daughter? Perhaps she will love a man unworthy of her; perhaps she will not be loved by him she loves. Often when I am watching her the tears come into my eyes. To part with a charming creature, a flower, a rose which has lived in our bosom like a bud on a rose-bush, and give her to a

man who deprives us of all! It is thinking of you, you who for two years have not written me even the three words "I am happy," which has brought into my mind the drama of marriage, dreadful to every mother who is a mother indeed.

Adieu! I don't know why I write to you, for you don't deserve my friendship. Oh, answer me, my own Louise!

LII.

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

THE CHALET.

A SILENCE of two years excites your curiosity, and you want to know why I have not written; but, my dear Renée, there are no words nor signs nor language in which to express my happiness; our souls have the strength to sustain it, — there, in two words, is all I can tell you.

We have made not the slightest effort to be happy. We understand each other in all things; in two years there has never been a jarring note in our concert, not a discord in our feelings, not the faintest difference in our wills. In short, my dearest, there is no day which does not bring its own especial fruit, no moment that fancy does not render delightful. Not only are we sure that our life can never be monotonous, but we fear

sometimes it cannot be long enough for all the poesies of our love, which is fruitful as Nature, and as varied as she.

No, we have not found a single disappointment! We please each other better, far better, than at first, and we hourly discover new reasons to love one another. Often we say to ourselves in the evening, as we are walking after dinner by our pond, that the next day we will surely go to Paris out of mere curiosity, as sight-seers, — very much as one might say: "Let us go to Switzerland."

"Ah, yes," Gaston says, "they tell me there's a new boulevard; the Madeleine is finished; we really ought to go and see all that."

Bah! the next day we stay in bed, and breakfast in our room. Mid-day comes; the weather is warm, too warm to make an effort. He asks me to let him look at me, and he does, as if I were a picture; he buries himself in the contemplation, which, as you may fancy, is reciprocal. The tears come into our eyes; we think of our happiness, and tremble. I am always his mistress; that is to say, I seem to love him less than he loves me. That deception is delicious. There is such charm for women in seeing sentiment greater than desire, in seeing our master stop there where we wish him to remain.

You asked me to tell you what Gaston is like.

But, dear Renée, it is impossible to make a portrait of the man we love; we cannot be truthful. Besides. between ourselves, there is a singular and sad result of our manners and customs, - namely: nothing is so different as a man in society and the man who loves; the difference is so great that they do not resemble each other in any particular. He who takes the graceful attitudes of a graceful dancer to whisper in our ear at the corner of a fireplace some word of love may not have any of love's true graces such as women desire them. On the other hand, a man who seems ugly, without manners, and ill-dressed in his black cloth, may hide a lover who possesses the very spirit of love, and who will never be ridiculous in any of those positions where we ourselves, with our external airs and graces, may sometimes fail. To find in a man a mysterious harmony between what he seems to be and what he is; to meet with one who in the privacy of married life has that innate grace which cannot be acquired,—the grace that antique sculpture has displayed in the chastity of its statues, the innocence of abandonment to Nature that the ancients have put into those poems which, even in the nude, seem to our souls to be clothed with garments, - all this ideal, which springs from ourselves and belongs to the world of harmonies, and is no doubt the essence of all things, the vast problem which the imagination of all women is incessantly seeking, - well,

Gaston is the living solution of it. Ah! dearest, I never knew till now what love and youth and intellect and beauty, all united, were.

My Gaston is never affected; his grace is instinctive. it develops without effort. When we walk in the woods, his arm about my waist, mine on his shoulder, side to side, our heads touching, we move with even step and a motion so soft and uniform, that any one who saw us pass might think we were one being gliding along the paths like the Immortals of Homer. This harmony is in desire, thought, and word. Sometimes beneath the foliage still damp from a passing shower, when the grass is lustrous with the rain-drops, we have taken long walks without uttering a word, listening to the plash of water, delighting in the ruddy color which the setting sun spreads upon the tree-tops or dashes upon their old gray trunks. Surely, then our thoughts were a prayer, secret and confused, rising to heaven as an excuse for happiness. Sometimes we exclaim together at the same instant, when a sudden turn of the path shows us, afar, some delicious vista If you knew what there is of honey and of depth in a kiss, almost a timid one, amid that holy nature! It makes one think that God made us to pray thus to him. Then we go home, loving each other better, always better. Such a love between husband and wife would seem insulting to the world of Paris; we can only indulge it, like lovers, buried in our woods.

Gaston, my dear, is of middle height, which is that of all men of energy; he is neither stout nor thin, and is very well-made; his limbs are well-rounded; he is active in his movements, he jumps a ditch with the spring of a wild animal. In any position, no matter what it is, he has an instinct in him by which he finds his equilibrium, - which is rare in men who have the habit of meditating. Though dark, as distinguished from fair, his skin is extremely white. His hair is black as jet, and produces a vigorous contrast with the dead-white tones of his throat and forehead. He has the melancholy head of Louis XIII. His moustache and royale are black; I have made him cut off his whiskers and beard, they have become so common. His sacred poverty kept him pure from all the stains that degrade young men. His teeth are magnificent; his health perfect. The glance of his blue eye, to me of magnetic tenderness, takes fire and gleams like a flame when his soul is troubled. Like all strong men with powerful intellects he possesses an equability of character which would surprise you as much as it surprised me.

Many women have told me of their home trials, — the instability of will and restlessness of men who are discontented with themselves; who either will not or do not know how to grow old; whose wasted youth has left them eternal regrets; whose veins are poisoned;

whose eyes have a lurking sadness; who harass others to hide their own distrusts; who avenge themselves on their wives because they cannot be agreeable themselves, and who secretly hate our merits as a reproach to their own defects, - all these trials youth knows nothing of; they are the attributes of ill-proportioned marriages.

Oh, my dear Renée, marry Athénaïs to none but a young man. If you knew how I feast on that constant smile, which is ever varied by a refined and delicate mind, - a smile which speaks, telling of thoughts of love and mute acknowledgment; binding past joys ever to present ones. Nothing is forgotten between We make the smallest things in Nature the sharers of our happiness; they are all living, they have a voice in the depths of our woods. mossy oak, near the keeper's house, tells us how we sat there, tired, under its shade, and Gaston explained to me the nature of mosses and told me their history, until, from fact to fact and science to science our thought rose to the ends of life. Our two minds have something so fraternal in them that I often think they are two copies of the same book. You see, I am making myself literary! We both have the habit of following out a thing to its fullest extent, of trying to perceive all there is to it, and the proofs that we constantly give ourselves of the integrity of this inner sense is a pleasure that is ever new. We have come to regard this accordance of mind as an evidence of love; if it were ever to fail, the disaster would be to us what an infidelity is in other homes.

My life, full of pleasures, may nevertheless seem to you very laborious; for I must tell you, dear, that Louise-Armande-Marie de Chaulien takes carè of her own room; my religion enters into the smallest things appertaining to its worship. I do my room with all the care a girl in love will spend upon her own adornment. I'm as fussy as an old maid. My dressing-room, instead of being chaos, is a delightful boudoir. The master, the sovereign, may enter at all hours and his eye will encounter nothing to afflict or surprise or disenchant him; flowers, perfume, elegance, all, can only In the early morning, at daybreak, while he is still asleep, I go into a little dressing-room, where wise with the experience of my mother - I remove all traces of sleep with a bath of cold water. The pores of the skin don't do their duty during sleep, the skin gets heated and clogged, and you see a sort of atmosphere upon it. But out of a sponge-bath a woman emerges like a young girl. Perhaps that explains the myth of Venus rising from the sea; I know that water gives me the sparkling freshness of the Aurora. I comb and perfume my hair; and after this minute and private toilet I slip back and appear to the master like a

spring morning. He is charmed with the freshness of the flower, though he cannot explain it. Later, my toilet for the day concerns my maid and takes place in the larger dressing-room. Thus I actually make three toilets, sometimes four, a day for Monsieur my husband.

But we have some work to do, nevertheless. take a deep interest in our flowers, those beautiful creatures of our conservatory, and in our trees. have made ourselves seriously botanists, and we love our flowers passionately; the Chalet is filled with them. Our lawns are always green, our groups of trees and shrubs are as carefully tended as those of the richest Nothing can be more beautiful than the grounds about the house. We are extremely fastidious about our fruit, and we keep incessant watch over our hot-beds, and Montreuil peaches, our walled fruit, and our standard pears. But in case these rural occupations should not be satisfying enough for the mind of my adored, of which I have had my doubts, I advised him to finish in this perfect quiet and solitude certain plays which he began in the days of his poverty, and which are really very fine.

That sort of work is the only one in literature which can be taken up, laid aside, and returned to; it requires long reflection and does not demand the same perpetual chiselling as to style. No one can write dialogue con-

secutively. Long pauses are needed; clever strokes must be thought of, situations arranged, climaxes found, and also witty sayings, — which are only produced by the mind as the plant gives its flowers, and are, moreover, found more readily by waiting till they come to you than by search. This pursuit of ideas pleases me extremely. I have made myself Gaston's collaborator, and I never leave him now, not even when he soars away into vast regions of imagination.

Now you know how I spend my winter evenings. Our household moves so easily that we have never since our marriage had a word of reproach, not even a correction to make to our servants; they are happy and they see that their condition will not be changed except by their own fault. We allow the gardeners to sell the surplus of the fruit and vegetables. The dairy-woman does the same with the milk and cream and fresh butter. Only, of course, the best products are reserved for us. The servants are pleased with their profits, and we are enchanted with this profusion, which no fortune can procure in that dreadful Paris, where fine peaches cost, each, the revenue of a hundred francs.

All this, my dear, has a meaning. I assume to be the world to my husband; now, the world is amusing; my husband must not, therefore, be allowed to be bored in this solitude. I thought I was jealous when I was loved and allowed myself to be loved; but I know now

what the jealousy of a woman who loves really is, — that is, real jealousy. It has come to this, that if a single glance of his seems indifferent I tremble. Sometimes I say to myself, "What if he ceased to love me?" — and I shudder. Oh! I am before him as the soul of a Christian is before God.

Alas! my Renée, I still have no children. The moment will doubtless come when the feelings of a father and mother will be needed to keep us in love with this retreat; we shall both desire the little brown or blond heads, the little frocks, the pelerines skipping and running along our flowery paths and among the copses. Oh! it is unnatural, abnormal, that flowers should have no fruits! The recollection of your beautiful family assails me poignantly at times. My life — mine! — has narrowed, while yours has expanded, has shone out. Love is profoundly selfish, whereas motherhood tends to multiply all feelings. I deeply felt this difference between us when I read your good, your tender letter. Your happiness fills me with envy when I think of you living in those three hearts.

Yes! you are happy; you have wisely conformed to the laws of social life; whereas I am aloof from all. Nothing can ever console a woman for the loss of her beauty but loving and beloved children. I shall soon be thirty, and at that age a woman begins some terrible inward lamentations. I am still beautiful, but I see

the boundary of a woman's life; beyond it, what will become of me? When I am forty he will still be young, I shall be old. Whenever that thought enters my heart I lie at his feet and make him swear that when he feels his love diminishing he will tell me so—instantly. But he is only a child; he swears it in a tone as if his love could never diminish; and he is so beautiful that—oh, Renée, you understand?—I believe him!

Adieu, dear angel; will it again be years before we write to each other? Happiness is monotonous in its expression; perhaps it is because of that great difficulty that Dante seems to loving souls grander in the Paradiso than in the Inferno. I am not Dante, I am only your friend, and I do not want to tire you out. But you, — you must write to me, for you have in your children an ever-varying happiness and a growing one, whereas mine — but oh! why talk of it any more?

Adieu; I send you a thousand tender thoughts.

LIII.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

My DEAR LOUISE, — I have read and reread your letter and the more it penetrates my mind, the more I feel that you are less a woman than a child. You have

not changed; you forget what I have told you a thousand times; namely, that the passion of Love is a theft committed by the social state from the natural state; it is so transient in nature that the resources of society cannot change its primitive condition. Therefore all noble souls have endeavored to dignify that passion, to make a man of that child; but then Love becomes, you say, an anomaly.

Society desires to be fruitful. By substituting lasting sentiments for the transient joys of nature it has created the grandest of all human things,— the Family, eternal base of all society. To this it sacrifices the man as well as the woman; for, let us not mislead ourselves, the father of a family gives his activity, his powers, all his fortunes to his wife. It is the wife who profits by these sacrifices. Luxury, wealth, are mostly for her; for her the glory and elegance, the flower and sweetness of the home. Oh, my angel, you are once more taking life amiss. To be worshipped is the theory of the young girl, good for the spring-tide of life, but not that of the woman who is a wife and a mother.

Perhaps it is enough for a woman's self-love to know that she can make herself adored. If you wish to be a wife and a mother be satisfied with that knowledge and return to Paris. Let me tell you again and yet again that you will lose through happiness what others lose through unhappiness. Listen to me, my child;

even if I could be loved by a man for whom I felt in me the love you feel for Gaston, I still would hold to my dear duty, to my sweet family. Motherhood is to the heart of a woman one of those simple, natural, fruitful, inexhaustible things that are like the very elements of life. I remember how one day, now fourteen years ago, I clasped self-devotion as a drowning man clings to the mast of his vessel, in despair; but to-day, when I evoke the memory of all my past before me, I choose once more that motive as the principle of my life; for it is the safest and the most fruitful of all. The knowledge of your life, which is based, oh! dear Louise, on a passionate egotism, has strengthened my resolution. I will never tell you all these things again; but I ought to tell them to you once more and for the last time because I see that you are putting your happiness to a most terrible trial.

I have reflected deeply over your life in the country, and another observation comes into my mind which I think I ought to tell you. Life is made up, both for heart and body, of certain regular movements. All excess brought into the mechanism is a cause of pleasure or of pain; now pleasure, or pain, is a fever of the soul which is essentially transient, because neither can be long borne. To make one's life an excess, is n't that making it a life of illness? You are ill, so long as you maintain at the level of passion an emotion which

ought to become in marriage a pure and equable power. Yes, my angel, to-day I know it, the glory of a home is in that calm existence, that deep and mutual comprehension, that communion of joys and trials for which it is sometimes laughed at. Oh! how grand was that saying of the Duchesse de Sully, the wife of the great Sully, when they told her that her husband, grave as he seemed, did not scruple to have a mistress: "That is explainable," she answered. "I am the honor of the house. I should be very sorry to play the part of a courtesan."

My Louise, you, who are more passionate than tender, you wish to be the wife and mistress too. With the soul of Héloïse and the senses of Saint Teresa, you give yourself wholly up to a disorder sanctioned by the laws; in other words, you deprave the institution of marriage. Yes, you, who judged me so severely when I seemed immoral in accepting from the day of my marriage the means of happiness within my reach, you deserve to-day the reproach you made me then. You want to bend nature and society to the service of your passion. You remain what you were; you are not transforming yourself into what a woman should be. You are retaining the wishes and the will and exactions of a young girl. I might call your passion calculating. Are you not selling your adornments for a price? Behind all those preparations and precautions, I think I see you are distrustful. Oh! dear Louise, if you did but know the sweetness of the labor women do in making themselves good and tender to their family. The independence of my character took its rise in that early sadness which maternal pleasures dissipated, and now the joys of family are my recompense. If the morning was difficult, the evening will be pure and serene. I fear it may be otherwise with your life. As I finished reading your letter I prayed to God to convert you to the family; to make you taste those joys, unspeakable, constant, eternal, because they are true and simple and in our nature.

But alas! what can my reasoning do against an evil which makes you happy? The tears are in my eyes as I write these words. I did really and truly believe that a few months given to this passionate conjugal love would bring you back to a reasonable sense of things, through exhaustion of the sentiment; but I see you are insatiable,—after killing a lover you will now kill love. Adieu, dear misguided one; I despair of helping you, since the letter in which I strove so hard to bring you to the true life of woman in the social sphere, by a picture of my happiness, has only served to glorify the egotism of your existence. Yes, there is nought but yourself in your love, and you love Gaston far more for yourself than for him.

LIV.

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

May 20.

Renée! the blow has come - no, it has fallen upon your poor Louise with the rapidity of a thunderbolt. For me, you know well, that blow is doubt. Conviction would be death.

Two days ago, after my morning toilet, I looked everywhere for Gaston to take a little walk before breakfast. I could not find him. At last I went to the stable, and there I saw his mare covered with sweat; the groom was scraping off the clots of foam with a knife before rubbing her down.

- "Who has put Fedelta in such a state?" I asked.
- "Monsieur," replied the boy.

I saw the mud of Paris, which is not the least like country mud on the mare's legs. "He has been to Paris!" I thought. That thought brought a thousand others rushing into my heart, and all my blood flew there. To go to Paris without telling me, at the very hour when I always left him alone; to rush there and get back with such rapidity that Fedelta was almost foundered! Suspicion tightened its awful belt around me so that I could scarcely breathe. I walked a few

"I walked a few yards away, and sat'down on a bench to try and recover my self-possession."



yards away, and sat down on a bench to try and recover my self-possession.

Gaston found me thus, livid, and doubtless alarming; for he cried out, "What is the matter?" so hurriedly, and in a tone of voice of such anxiety, that I rose and took his arm. But my knees gave way under me, and I was compelled to sit down again. Then he took me in his arms and carried me into the parlor, for we were close to the house, and there the terrified servants followed us. But Gaston sent them all away with a motion of his hand. When we were alone I was able to rise, and, without saying a word, I went to my chamber, where I locked myself in to weep at my ease. Gaston stood at the door two hours listening to my sobs, and asking his poor creature questions with the patience of an angel; but I did not answer them. All I said was:—

"I will see you when my eyes are less red and my voice does not tremble."

He darted out of the house. I bathed my eyes in cold water, and my face; then after a time I opened the door and found him outside, although I had not heard his step in returning.

- "What is the matter?" he asked again.
- "Nothing," I said; "I saw the mud of Paris on Fedelta's legs; and I could not understand why you went there without telling me; but you are free."

"Your punishment for your doubts shall be," he said, "to wait until to-morrow for an explanation."

"Look me in the eyes," I said. I plunged mine into his; the infinite penetrated the infinite. No, I did not see that cloud which infidelity brings into the soul, and which must inevitably dim the clearness of the pupils.

I pretended to be satisfied; but I was not. Men know, as we do, how to lie and to deceive.

Since then we have not been parted for a moment. Oh, dearest, as I look at him I feel myself indissolubly bound to him. An inward trembling shakes me when he returns into the room after leaving me for a moment. My life is in him and not in myself. I am giving cruel denials to your cruel letter. Never did I feel this dependence on the being of another with my sacred Spaniard, to whom I was what this cruel child now is to me. How I hate that mare! How foolish I have been to keep horses at all! But alas! I should have to cut off Gaston's feet or lock him into the Chalet. Such stupid thoughts as these fill my mind; you can therefore judge how beside myself I am. If love is not cage enough no power can keep a man who wearies of his life.

[&]quot;Do I weary you?" I said to him plainly.

[&]quot;How you torment yourself about nothing," he answered, with his eyes full of tender pity; "I have never loved you as I do now."

"If that is true," I replied, "let me sell Fedelta." "Sell her." he said.

The words crushed me; Gaston seemed to say, "You are the rich one; I have nothing; my will does not exist." If he did not think that, I believed he thought it; and again I left him and went to bed, for it was late at night.

Oh! Renée, in solitude a heart-rending thought may lead to suicide. These delicious gardens, that starry night, the cool breeze wafting me the incense of our flowers, our valley, our woodland heights—all, all seemed to me gloomy, black, a desert! I was, as it were, at the foot of a precipice, among serpents and poisonous plants; I could see no God in Heaven. After such a night a woman is old.

"Take Fedelta and ride to Paris," I said to him the next morning, "We will not sell her; I love her, for she carries you."

He was not deceived; there was anger in my voice, though I tried to conceal it.

"Have confidence in me," he answered, holding out his hand with so noble an action and giving me at the same time so noble a look that I felt myself abased.

- "How petty I am!" I cried.
- "No," he said, "you love me, that is all;" and he pressed me to him.

"Go to Paris without me," I said, in order to make him feel I gave up all suspicion.

He went; I thought he would have stayed! I can never tell you what I suffered. There was in me another myself who I did not know existed. These scenes, my dearest, have a tragic solemnity for a woman who loves, which cannot be expressed in words. The whole of life seems to be in that passing moment; the eye sees no other horizon; a mere nothing is all, a glance-is a book, words are ice, in a motion of the lips we read our death. I expected a return; for my own act was noble and grand.

I ran to the roof of the Chalet to follow him with my eyes along the road. Ah! my dear Renée, I saw him disappear with frightful rapidity.

"How he rides!" I thought, involuntarily.

Once more alone, I fell back into the hell of suspicion, into the tumult of conjecture. At times the certainty of betrayal seemed to me a balm compared to the agony of doubt. Doubt is our duel with ourselves, and we give ourselves fearful wounds. I walked about, I roamed the paths, I returned to the Chalet; then I started again like a mad-woman.

Gaston left me at seven in the morning and he did not return till eleven. Now as it takes but half an hour to reach Paris by the park of Saint-Cloud and the Bois de Boulogne, it is plain that he must have been three hours in the city.

He came in gayly, bringing me a riding-whip made of india-rubber and mounted with a gold handle. For the last two weeks I had been without a whip, mine being old and broken.

"So this is why you have tortured me?" I said, admiring the workmanship of the handle, in which there was a vinaigrette.

I fully understood that the gift concealed some new deception; but nevertheless I threw myself on his breast and made him tender reproaches for letting me torment myself for such a trifle. He thought he had done a clever thing. I saw in his whole manner, in his eye, the sort of inward satisfaction men feel when they have succeeded in deceiving others; a gleam seems to escape their soul, a flash from their mind is reflected on their features, and shaken from them with the movements of the body. While admiring the pretty thing I asked him suddenly, at a moment when we were looking at each other face to face: -

- "Who designed this work of art for you?"
- "An artist, a friend of mine."
- "Ah! -- and Verdier mounted it," I added, reading the name of the jeweller, which was engraved on the whip.

Gaston is nothing but a child, and he blushed. I rewarded him with caresses for being ashamed of deceiving me. I played the innocent; and he thought the whole affair had blown over.

May 25th.

The next morning by six I was in my riding-habit, and I reached Verdier's at seven, where I saw several whips of the same pattern as mine. A clerk recognized mine when I showed it to him.

"We sold it yesterday to a gentleman," he said, describing Gaston exactly.

I could have no doubt that it was he. I will not tell you how my heart throbbed in going to Paris and during this little scene. When Gaston woke at eight o'clock he found me fresh and dainty in my morning dress, walking about among my flowers with deceitful indifference; I was certain that nothing had betrayed my absence, for no one knew of it but my old Philippe.

"Gaston," I said, as we walked round the pond, "I know perfectly well the difference there is between a work of art, unique in itself, which would have taken time to design for a friend, and one which has been cast in a mould."

Gaston turned pale and gazed at me as I drew forth the accusing gift.

"My friend," I said, "this is not a whip; it is a screen behind which you hide a secret."

Thereupon, my dear, I gave myself the atrocious pleasure of getting him involved in a labyrinth of lies and deceptions from which he could not escape, though he displayed an amazing eleverness in trying to find a

wall to scale. He was compelled, however, to stand his ground before an adversary who consented after a time to let him think he had convinced her. But this compliance came too late, as it always does in such scenes. I had committed the fault against which my mother had tried to warn me. By laying bare my jealousy I had as good as declared war and its stratagems against Gaston. My dear, jealousy is essentially stupid and blundering.

So then I vowed to myself to suffer in silence, to watch everything, to obtain certainty, and if my suspicions were confirmed, either to make an end of everything between me and Gaston, or consent to my misfortune; there is no other course of conduct for women brought up as we have been.

What is he hiding from me? for he is hiding something. The secret must concern some woman. Is it some youthful affair for which he blushes? What is it? Ah, Renée, that What is engraved in four letters of fire upon everything. I read that fatal word on the mirror of my pond, among my trees, in the clouds of the sky, on the ceilings, at our meals, in the very flowers of my carpet. When I sleep a voice cries to me, "What?"

Since that day there has been in our life a torturing interest; I have the bitterest, the most acrid thoughts that ever corroded a woman's heart — to belong to a

man whom we believe to be unfaithful! Oh, dearest, my present life is hell and heaven both. I have never before set foot in this fiery furnace — I, until now so sacredly adored.

June.

Since the day of which I wrote last, Gaston, instead of working lazily, with the ease of a rich artist who pets his work, sets himself tasks to accomplish, like a writer who lives by his pen. He employs four hours every day in actual toil and has finished two of his plays.

" He wants money!"

That thought is whispered to me by an inward voice. He spends almost nothing. We live in such absolute confidence that there is not a corner in his study that my eyes and my fingers have not penetrated. His expenditures have never reached two thousand francs a year, and I knew that he had thirty thousand francs, not so much laid by, as simply placed in a drawer in his room. You will know what I did. I rose in the night and went, while he slept, to see if the money were still there. The chill of death seized me when I found it gone!

That same week I discovered that he goes to Sèvres for his letters, and he must destroy them as soon as read, for although I am as inventive as Figaro, I have never yet found a trace of them. Alas! my Renée, in

spite of all the fine vows I made to myself apropos of the riding-whip, an impulse of my soul, which I must call madness, drove me into following Gaston one day in one of his rapid rides to the post-office. He was terrified when I found him on horseback paying the postage on a letter he held in his hand. After looking at me fixedly for a moment, he put Fedelta to a gallop and rode home so rapidly that I was utterly exhausted on reaching the gate, though I hardly felt the bodily fatigue, my soul was so tortured.

Once there, Gaston said nothing; he rang and waited, but did not speak to me. I was more dead than alive. Either I was right, or I was wrong, but in either case my spying was unworthy of Armande-Louise-Marie de Chaulieu. I had rolled in the social gutter below even a grisette, side-by-side with courtesans, actresses, creatures without education. What sufferings!

At last the gate opened; he gave his horse to a groom, and I dismounted — but into his arms; he held them out to me. I took up my riding-habit on my left arm, and gave him my right; we walked on — still silent. The hundred steps we made may be counted for me as a hundred years of purgatory. At each step a thousand thoughts, almost visible, hovered in tongues of flame before my eyes, and darted into my soul, with each a fang, a different venom! When the groom

and the horses were out of sight, I stopped Gaston; I looked at him, and said, pointing to the letter which he still held unopened in his right hand: -

"Let me read it?"

He gave it to me; I unscaled it, and read a letter in which Raoul Nathan, the dramatic author, told him that one of our plays, received, studied, and rehearsed, would be acted on the following Saturday. The letter contained the tickets for a box.

Though to me this was like passing from martyrdom to heaven, the devil still cried to me, to trouble my joy, "Where are those thirty thousand francs?" But dignity, honor, all my old self forbade me to ask the question. It was on my lips; but I knew if the thought became language I must throw myself into the pond; and I resisted, with difficulty, the desire to speak. Oh! dearest, I suffered then something beyond the strength of woman to bear.

- "You are wearving of this place, my poor Gaston," I said. "If you like, we will return to Paris."
- "Return to Paris! why?" he said. "I merely wanted to know if I really have talent, and quaff a little of the punch of success."

Some day when he is at work I may perhaps play surprise when I look into his drawer and miss the money. But even so, shall I not tempt the answer "I lent it to such a one"? A man with presence of mind like Gaston will surely say that or something like it.

My dear Renée, the outcome of this is that the great success of the play which all Paris is now running after belongs to us; though Nathan has all the glory, for our names are not given; I am only one of the stars which appear in the bills as "And M M. * * * ." I saw the first representation hidden in a proscenium box on the ground-floor.

July 1.

Gaston still works hard and still goes to Paris. He works at his plays to have an excuse to go there, and also to make money. We have three plays accepted and two more ordered. Oh! my dear, I am lost; I walk in darkness. I would burn my house if that would give me light. What is the meaning of Gaston's conduct? Is he ashamed of receiving money from me? His soul is too lofty to concern itself with such trifles. Besides, when a man begins to admit such scruples they are inspired in him by some condition of his heart. He will accept all things from the wife he loves, but he will take nothing from the wife he thinks of leaving or no longer loves. If he wants so much money it must be to spend it on a woman; if he wanted it only for himself he would take it from my purse without hesitation. He knows we have a hundred thousand francs laid by.

Thus, my own Renée, I have gone through the whole world of suppositions, and I have come to the conclusion, all things fairly considered, that I have a rival. He leaves me, for whom? I am resolved to see her.

July 10.

I have seen. I am lost. Yes, Renée, at thirty years of age, in all the prime of my beauty, rich with the resources of my mind, fresh, elegant, I am betrayed; and for whom? For an Englishwoman with big feet, and big bones, and a huge bosom, — a British cow! I cannot doubt it. Here is what happened lately.

Weary with doubt, jealous of Gaston's work, uneasy at his perpetual trips to Paris, I took some measures; and these measures made me degrade myself so low that I cannot tell you what they were. Three days ago I learned that when Gaston rides to Paris he goes to a house in the rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, where his loves are guarded by a discretion that is very unusual in Paris. The porter, evidently no talker, said little, but enough to reduce me to despair. I then resolved to sacrifice my life; all I wanted was to know all.

I took an apartment in Paris in the house directly opposite to that where Gaston goes, and I saw him with my own eyes ride into the courtyard on horseback. Too soon, too soon, I had a horrible, a dreadful revelation. This Englishwoman, who seemed to me about

thirty-six years of age, calls herself Madame Gaston. This discovery was like a death-blow to me. Next, I saw her going to the Tuileries with two children! Oh. Renée! two boys who are the living miniatures of Gaston. It is impossible not to be struck with so scandalous a resemblance. And such beautiful children! dressed with that magnificence with which Englishwomen dress their boys.

She has given him children! Ah! that explains all. This Englishwoman is a species of Greek statue come down from some pedestal; she has the whiteness and the coldness of marble; she walks pompously like a happy mother; she is beautiful, - yes, I must own that, — but she is heavy and clumsy as a line-of-battle ship. There is nothing refined or distinguished about her. Assuredly, she is not a lady; she is the daughter of some small farmer in a remote county, or the eleventh child of some poor minister.

I returned from Paris half-dead. As I rode back thoughts assailed me like demons. Can she be married to him? Did he know her before he married me? Was she the deserted mistress of some rich man, whom Gaston has suddenly met with? - but no, there were those children! I made suppositions without number, as if any were needed in presence of those children. The next day I returned to Paris, and found excuses enough to give the porter some money, and ask one

question: "Is Madame Gaston legally married?" To which he replied: -

"Yes, mademoiselle."

July 15.

MY DEAR RENÉE, - Ever since that fatal morning I have redoubled in love for Gaston, and I find him more loving than ever; he is so young. Twenty times, when I rise in the morning, I have been on the point of saying to him: "You love me as well as you do that woman in the rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, don't vou?"

I dare not explain to myself the meaning of my own submission.

- "You love children?" I said to him one day.
- "Oh, yes," he answered, "and we will have them."
- "But how?"
- "I have consulted doctors, and they all advise me to travel for a few months."
- "Gaston," I said, "I could not love an absent man; if I could, I should have stayed in the convent all my days."

He began to laugh; but as for me, the very word journey stabbed me to the heart. Oh! surely, I'd rather jump from a window and be killed at once than roll down the staircase, clutching at every step.

Adieu, my darling; my death will be gentle, elegant, but sure. I made my will yesterday. You may come and see me now; the blockade is raised. My death, like my life, shall be marked by distinction and grace. I will die my whole self.

Farewell, dear sister-soul, — you, whose affection has known no repelling, no ups, no downs, but like the equable shining of the moon, has ever soothed my heart. You and I may not have known the ardor of love, but neither have we tasted its poisonous bitterness. You have seen life wisely.

Farewell.

LV.

MADAME DE L'ESTORADE TO MADAME GASTON.

July 17.

My dear Louise,—I send this letter by a messenger before I am able to go to the Chalet myself. Be calm. Your last words seem to me so insane that I thought I did right, under the circumstances, in confiding everything to Louis. It was a matter of saving you from yourself.

If, like you, we have employed bad means, the result is so good that I am certain of your approval. I even went so low as to employ the police. But do not be anxious; this will remain a secret between the prefect and ourselves and you. Gaston is an angel. Here are the facts:—

His brother, Louis Gaston, died in Calcutta, in the service of a mercantile company, ruined financially at the very moment when he was about to return to France, rich, happy, and married. He had obtained a brilliant fortune through his marriage with the widow of an English merchant, after working for ten years to support himself and provide for his brother Marie. whom he idolized, and to whom he never wrote of his trials and disappointments, fearing to distress him. Just as he was about to return home prosperous and happy, he was overtaken by the failure of the famous house of Halmer. His wife's property was all in it, and she was ruined. The blow was so terrible that Louis Gaston went almost beside himself. The mental faculties, breaking down, affected his physical strength. and he died, as I said, in Bengal, where he had gone to try to rescue some shreds of his poor wife's fortune.

While prosperous, this dear, good captain had placed in the hands of a banker the sum of three hundred thousand francs for transmission to his brother; but this banker was dragged down by the Halmer failure and that last resource was taken from them. The widow of Louis Gaston, the beautiful woman whom you think your rival, is in Paris with two children (your nephews), and without a sou. Her jewels sufficed only to pay the passages of her family from India. Madame Louis went to the address of your husband's former lodgings. As he had

not left word where he was going, the people of the house referred her to Daniel d'Arthèz as the person most likely to give her information.

D'Arthèz generously provided for the immediate wants of the young widow. It seems that the captain had written to d'Arthez at the time of his marriage, knowing him to be Marie's best friend, asking him how he could best send that large sum of money safely to his young brother. D'Arthèz replied that Marie Gaston had lately become rich through his marriage with the Baronne de Macumer.

On the arrival of the widow, d'Arthèz naturally wrote to your husband and told him the condition in which his sister-in-law and nephews were; and he also told him of the generous intentions of Louis Gaston and his wife toward him, which were only frustrated by illluck. Your dear Gaston, as you can well imagine, rushed to Paris. That is the cause and history of the first morning ride. During the last three years he had laid aside fifty thousand francs out of the sums you had forced him to take; and he now invested them in the Funds in his nephews' names, obtaining twelve hundred francs a year for each of them. He also took and furnished the apartment in which your sister-in-law lives; and he promised her three thousand francs every month for her expenses. This is the cause and history of the disappearance of that money, of his work for the theatres, and of his great pleasure at the success of his first piece. You see now that Madame Gaston is not your rival, and bears your name legitimately.

A man as noble and as sensitive as Gaston concealed this from you, fearing your generosity. Your husband has never looked upon your means as his own D'Arthèz read me a letter which he wrote to him at the time he asked him to be one of the witnesses of your marriage. In it, Marie Gaston said that his happiness would be complete if he had had no debts he was forced to let you pay, and if he could be rich A virgin soul cannot prevent itself from having such feelings. They exist, or they do not exist; when they do exist their delicacy and their exactions are conceivable. It is thus quite simple that Gaston wished to do what was needful for his brother's widow and children himself, without calling upon you; especially when that widow had set apart for him three hundred thousand francs of her own fortune.

I have seen her; she is beautiful, she has a heart, her manners are distinguished, but she is not clever. The woman is a mother; is not that as good as telling you I took to her the instant I saw her with a child at her side, and another in her arms dressed like the baby of an English lord? All for my children is written upon her and upon everything about her.

So, my Louise, instead of being angry with your

Gaston, you may now have fresh reasons to love him. I have seen him. He is the most charming young man in all Paris. Ah yes, dear child, I can well comprehend that a woman should adore him; he has the countenance of his soul.

If I were you, I should take the widow and her children to the Chalet and build them a delightful little cottage near by; you could make the children your own. Therefore, dearest, be calm and happy; and give Gaston in your turn a surprise.

LVI.

MADAME GASTON TO MADAME DE L'ESTORADE.

An! my beloved Renée, hear the terrible, fatal, insolent words which that imbecile Lafayette said to his king: It is too late! Oh! my life, my beautiful life! no physician can give it back to me. Death has struck me. Alas! was I not born an ignis fatuus of a woman, destined to be extinguished as I shone? Torrents of tears are pouring from my eyes, but — I can only weep apart from him; I flee him, but he seeks me. My despair is all within my soul. Dante forgot my torment in his Hell.

Come and see me die.

LVII.

THE COMTESSE DE L'ESTORADE TO THE COMTE DE L'ESTORADE.

THE CHALET, August 7.

My DEAR HUSBAND, — Take the children and go to Provence without me; I stay here with Louise, who has only a short time to live. I owe myself to her and to her husband, who will go mad, I think.

Since receiving that last letter which made me fly to Ville d'Avray with the physicians, I have not left her for a moment, and I could not write to you sooner, for this is the fifteenth night I have watched with her.

When I arrived I found her with Gaston, beautiful as ever and exquisitely dressed, her face all smiles and happiness, — sublime deception! These two beautiful children had told each other all. For a moment I, like Gaston, was the dupe of her artifice; but Louise presently wrung my hand and whispered: —

"I must deceive him, I am dying."

An icy chill came over me as I felt the burning heat of her hand and saw the flush in her cheeks. I was glad then of my own prudence, for, not wishing to alarm any one, I had asked the physicians who came with me to walk about the shrubbery for a while until I sent for them.

"Leave us now," she said to Gaston. "Two women who meet after a separation of five years have many secrets to tell each other; I know Renée has much to say to me."

Once alone, she flung herself in my arms unable to restrain her tears.

- "But what is the matter?" I said. "I have brought you, in any case, the head-surgeon and the chief physician of the Hôtel-Dieu, together with Bianchon and another doctor; there are four of them."
- "Oh! if they could only save me!" she cried.
 "There may be time; let them come! The same feeling that drove me to die will help me to live."
 - "But what have you done?"
 - "I have destroyed my lungs"
 - " How?"
- "I put myself in perspirations at night, and then went to the shores of the pond and stood in the dew and mist. Gaston thinks I have a cold, but I am dying."
- "Send Gaston to Paris on some errand," I said, "and I will bring the doctors."

I was almost out of my mind when I went to fetch them from the wood where I had left them.

Alas, my dear friend, when the consultation was over not one of those learned men would give me the slightest hope; they think she will go at the fall of the leaves. Louise must die. The constitution of the dear creature has singularly served her purpose. She had, it seems, a tendency to the malady she has developed. She might have lived long, but the work of a few days has made her condition hopeless. I cannot tell you what I felt on listening to this judgment, which they carefully explained to me. You know that I have lived in Louise almost as much as in myself. I was overcome; I could not even take leave of those cruel men. Bathed in tears, I passed I know not how much time in painful meditation. A celestial voice roused me from my torpor.

"Well, I am doomed!" she said, laying her hand on my shoulder.

She made me rise and took me into her little salon. "You will not leave me, will you?" she said with a supplicating look. "I wish so much not to see despair about me; above all, I wish to deceive him, and I shall have the strength to do it. I am full of energy and youth, and I will die standing. I am not sorry for myself; I die as I wished to die—at thirty, young, beautiful, and still myself. As for him, I should have made him unhappy; I see that. I am caught in the meshes of my love, like a doe struggling in the net, impatient at being held; I am the doe—and a very wild one. My groundless jealousy has already wounded his heart and made it suffer. The day when my sus-

picions found him indifferent — the inevitable return for jealousy — well, I should have died then. I have had my account with life. There are some who see sixty years' service on the muster-roll of the world who have never really lived two years; whereas I, though I am only thirty, have known sixty years of love. So, for him, for me, this end is happiness. But for you and me, my Renée, it is another thing; you lose a sister

who loves you, and the loss is irreparable. You,

alone, have cause to mourn my death."

She was silent for a long time; I could not speak, I could only see her through a veil of tears; then she said: "My death conveys a cruel lesson. My dear philosopher in petticoats was right. Marriage should not have passion for its basis - nor even love. Your life, my Renée, is a fine one; you have walked in the right path, loving your Louis more and more as you advanced, whereas by resting conjugal love on excessive ardor it must decrease. I have twice been wrong; and twice death strikes my happiness with its fleshless hand. It robbed me of the noblest, the most devoted of men: and to-day it tears me from the most beautiful, the most poetic husband woman ever had. But then, I have known the beau ideal, the perfection, of the soul, and that of the outward form. In Felipe, the soul mastered the body and transformed it; in Gaston, the heart, the mind, and the beauty are equal rivals. I die adored — what more can I wish? Yes, to reconcile myself with God, whom, perhaps, I have too little thought of — to him I will spring, full of love, praying him to give me back my two angels in his heaven. Without them, paradise would be a desert to me. My example would be fatal; I am an exception. It is impossible to meet with many Felipes and Gastons; social law is here in harmony with natural law. Yes, woman is a feeble being, who ought in marriage to make the sacrifice of her will to that of the man, who ought in return to make her the sacrifice of his egoism. The rebellion our sex has lately raised and the complaints it utters with so much noise are silly blunders, and make us deserve the name of children which philosophers have given us."

And so she continued, in that sweet voice you know; making wise reflections in her own peculiar way, until Gaston returned, bringing with him his sister-in-law, her children, and their English nurse, whom Louise had asked him to go and fetch.

"See my pretty executioners!" she whispered to me as the children came in. "Was I mistaken? Are they not the image of their uncle?"

She was charming to Madame Louis Gaston, begging her to regard the Chalet as her own home, and doing its honors with those Chaulieu manners she possesses in the highest degree.

I wrote at once to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, the Duc de Rhétoré, and the Duc de Lenoncourt, also to Madeleine. I did well; for the next day Louise was unable to take a walk, in fact she did not rise till just in time to join us at dinner. Madeleine de Lenoncourt, the two brothers, and her mother arrived that evening. The coolness on the part of the family which Louise produced by her marriage has all passed away.

Since then the two brothers and the Duc de Chaulieu come out on horseback every morning, and the two duchesses spend all their evenings at the Chalet. Death unites as much as it separates; and it silences all petty passions. Louise is resplendent in grace and sense, and charm of soul and sensibility. To the last she shows that exquisite taste for which she is famed, and pours out for us the treasures of a mind which made her one of the queens of Paris.

- "I want to be lovely even in my coffin," she said to me with that smile which is hers alone, as I put her to bed, where she has now languished for the last two weeks. There is not a trace of illness in her rooms: the medicines, drinks, etc., the whole medical apparatus is out of sight.
- "I am making a good death, am I not?" she said to the rector of Sèvres, to whom she has given her confidence.

We cling to her and enjoy her like misers. Gaston,

who is now enlightened by our anxiety and prepared for the worst, is not wanting in courage, but he is vitally affected; and I should not be surprised if he followed his wife to the grave. Yesterday he said to me as we walked round the sheet of water before the house:—

"I ought to be the father of those children," pointing to his sister-in-law, who was at a little distance with his nephews. "I will never do anything to take me out of the world, but should it happen that I die, promise me that you will be a second mother to them, and that you will let your husband accept the guardianship which I intend to confide to him conjointly with my sister-in-law."

He said that without the least emotion and in the tone of a man who feels himself lost. His face replies with smiles to the smiles of his wife; I alone am not deceived by them. He displays a courage equal to hers. Louise wished to see her godson; but I was not sorry to tell her he was in Provence; she might have made him some liberal gift which would have pained me.

Adieu, my dear friend.

August 25 (her fête-day).

Last evening Louise was, for a short time only, delirious; but it was a graceful delirium, which proves that persons of mind do not become mad or foolish like common natures. She sang in a faint voice a few

Italian airs from the "Puritani" and "Somnambula" and "Moïse." We stood silently around her bed; even the Duc de Rhétoré had tears in his eyes, for it was evident that her soul was departing thus. She no longer saw us! but still there was all her natural grace and charm in that feeble song and in her divine gentleness.

Her last agony began during the night. At seven in the morning I lifted her from her bed myself; she had recovered some strength, and wished to be seated at her window. She asked for Gaston's hand. And then the loveliest angel we shall ever see upon this earth had left us nothing but her mortal remains.

The last sacraments had been administered to her the evening before, unknown to Gaston, who had gone to snatch a little sleep at that moment. She asked me to read to her in French the *De profundis*, while she sat there face to face with the beautiful nature she had created. She repeated mentally the words, clasping the hand of her husband who was kneeling beside her.

August 26.

My heart is broken. I have just seen her in her shroud; she is pale, with violet tints. Oh! my children, I want my children! Bring my children to me!

THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PRIVATE LIFE

A START IN LIFE
VENDETTA
STUDY OF A WOMAN
THE MESSAGE





TO LAURE.

Let the brilliant and modest mind that gave me the subject of this Scene have the honor of it.

Her brother,

DE BALZAC.

\mathbf{C} O N \mathbf{T} \mathbf{E} N \mathbf{T} \mathbf{S} .

A START IN LIFE.

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A START IN LIFE.

T.

THAT WHICH WAS LACKING TO PIERROTIN'S HAPPINESS.

RAILROADS, in a future not far distant, must force certain industries to disappear forever, and modify several others, more especially those relating to the different modes of transportation in use around Paris. Therefore the persons and things which are the elements of this Scene will soon give to it the character of an archæological work. Our nephews ought to be enchanted to learn the social material of an epoch which they will call the "olden time." The picturesque coucous which stood on the Place de la Concorde, encumbering the Cours-la-Reine, - coucous which had flourished for a century, and were still numerous in 1830, scarcely exist in 1842, unless on the occasion of some attractive suburban solemnity, like that of the Grandes Eaux of Versailles. In 1820, the various celebrated places called the "Environs of Paris" did not all possess a regular stage-coach service.

Nevertheless, the Touchards, father and son, had acquired a monopoly of travel and transportation to all the populous towns within a radius of forty-five miles: and their enterprise constituted a fine estabment in the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis. In spite of their long-standing rights, in spite, too, of their efforts, their capital, and all the advantages of a powerful centralization, the Touchard coaches (messageries) found terrible competitors in the coucous for all points within a circumference of fifteen or twenty miles. passion of the Parisian for the country is such that local enterprise could successfully compete with the Lesser Stage company, - Petites Messageries, the name given to the Touchard enterprise to distinguish it from that of the Grandes Messageries of the rue Montmartre. At the time of which we write, the Touchard success was stimulating speculators. For every small locality in the neighborhood of Paris there sprang up schemes of beautiful, rapid, and commodious vehicles, departing and arriving in Paris at fixed hours, which produced, naturally, a fierce competition. Beaten on the long distances of twelve to eighteen miles, the coucou came down to shorter trips, and so lived on for several years. At last, however, it succumbed to omnibuses, which demonstrated the possibility of carrying

eighteen persons in a vehicle drawn by two horses. To-day the *coucou* — if by chance any of those birds of ponderous flight still linger in the second-hand carriage-shops — might be made, as to its structure and arrangement, the subject of learned researches comparable to those of Cuvier on the animals discovered in the chalk-pits of Montmartre.

These petty enterprises, which had struggled since 1822 against the Touchards, usually found a strong foothold in the good-will and sympathy of the inhabitants of the districts which they served. The person undertaking the business as proprietor and conductor was nearly always an inn-keeper along the route, to whom the beings, things, and interests with which he had to do were all familiar. He could execute commissions intelligently; he never asked as much for his little stages, and therefore obtained more custom than the Touchard coaches. He managed to elude the necessity of a custom-house permit. If need were, he was willing to infringe the law as to the number of passengers he might carry. In short, he possessed the affection of the masses; and thus it happened that whenever a rival came upon the same route, if his days for running were not the same as those of the coucou, travellers would put off their journey to make it with their long-tried coachman, although his vehicle and his horses might be in a far from reassuring condition.

One of the lines which the Touchards, father and son, endeavored to monopolize, and the one most stoutly disputed (as indeed it still is), is that of Paris to Beaumont-sur-Oise, — a line extremely profitable, for three rival enterprises worked it in 1822. In vain the Touchards lowered their price; in vain they constructed better coaches and started oftener. Competition still continued, so productive is a line on which are little towns like Saint-Denis and Saint-Brice, and villages like Pierrefitte, Groslay, Écouen, Poncelles, Moisselles, Monsoult, Maffliers, Franconville, Presles, Nointel, Nerville, etc. The Touchard coaches finally extended their route to Chambly; but competition followed. To-day the Toulouse, a rival enterprise, goes as far as Beauvais.

Along this route, which is that toward England, there lies a road which turns off at a place well-named, in view of its topography, The Cave, and leads through a most delightful valley in the basin of the Oise to the little town of Isle-Adam, doubly celebrated as the cradle of the family, now extinct, of Isle-Adam, and also as the former residence of the Bourbon-Contis. Isle-Adam is a little town flanked by two large villages, Nogent and Parmain, both remarkable for splendid quarries, which have furnished material for many of the finest buildings in modern Paris and in foreign lands,—for the base and capital of the columns of the

Brussels theatre are of Nogent stone. Though remarkable for its beautiful sites, for the famous châteaux which princes, monks, and designers have built, such as Cassan, Stors, Le Val, Nointel, Persan, etc., this region had escaped competition in 1822, and was reached by two coaches only, working more or less in harmony.

This exception to the rule of rivalry was founded on reasons that are easy to understand. From the Cave, the point on the route to England where a paved road (due to the luxury of the Princes of Conti) turned off to Isle-Adam, the distance is six miles. No speculating enterprise would make such a détour, for Isle-Adam was the terminus of the road, which did not go beyond Of late years, another road has been made between the valley of Montmorency and the valley of the Oise; but in 1822 the only road which led to Isle-Adam was the paved highway of the Princes of Conti. Pierrotin and his colleague reigned, therefore, from Paris to Isle-Adam, beloved by every one along the way. Pierrotin's vehicle, together with that of his comrade, and Pierrotin himself, were so well known that even the inhabitants on the main road as far as the Cave were in the habit of using them; for there was always better chance of a seat to be had than in the Beaumont coaches, which were almost always full. Pierrotin and his competitor were on the best of terms. When the

former started from Isle-Adam, the latter was returning from Paris, and vice versa.

It is unnecessary to speak of the rival. Pierrotin possessed the sympathies of his region; besides, he is the only one of the two who appears in this veracious narrative. Let it suffice you to know that the two coach proprietors lived under a good understanding. rivalled each other loyally, and obtained customers by honorable proceedings. In Paris they used, for economy's sake, the same yard, hotel, and stable, the same coach-house, office, and clerk. This detail is alone sufficient to show that Pierrotin and his competitor were, as the popular saying is, "good dough." The hotel at which they put up in Paris, at the corner of the rue d'Enghien, is still there, and is called the "Lion d'Argent." The proprietor of the establishment, which from time immemorial had lodged coachmen and coaches, drove himself for the great company of Daumartin, which was so firmly established that its neighbors, the Touchards, whose place of business was directly opposite, never dreamed of starting a rival coach on the Daumartin line.

Though the departures for Isle-Adam professed to take place at a fixed hour, Pierrotin and his co-rival practised an indulgence in that respect which won for them the grateful affection of the country-people, and also violent remonstrances on the part of strangers accustomed to the regularity of the great lines of public conveyances. But the two conductors of these vehicles, which were half diligence, half coucou, were invariably defended by their regular customers. The afternoon departure at four o'clock usually lagged on till half-past, while that of the morning, fixed for eight o'clock, was seldom known to take place before nine. In this respect, however, the system was elastic. In summer, that golden period for the coaching business, the rule of departure, rigorous toward strangers, was often relaxed for country customers. This method not infrequently enabled Pierrotin to pocket two fares for one place, if a countryman came early and wanted a seat already booked and paid for by some "bird of passage" who was, unluckily for himself, a little late. Such elasticity will certainly not commend itself to purists in morality; but Pierrotin and his colleague justified it on the varied grounds of "hard times," of their losses during the winter months, of the necessity of soon getting better coaches, and of the duty of keeping exactly to the rules written on the tariff, copies of which were, however, never shown, unless some chance traveller was obstinate enough to demand it.

Pierrotin, a man about forty years of age, was already the father of a family. Released from the cavalry on the great disbandment of 1815, the worthy fellow had succeeded his father, who for many years had

driven a coucou of capricious flight between Paris and Isle-Adam. Having married the daughter of a small inn-keeper, he enlarged his business, made it a regular service, and became noted for his intelligence and a certain military precision. Active and decided in his ways, Pierrotin (the name seems to have been a sobriquet) contrived to give, by the vivacity of his countenance, an expression of sly shrewdness to his ruddy and weather-stained visage which suggested wit. He was not without that facility of speech which is acquired chiefly through "seeing life" and other countries. His voice, by dint of talking to his horses and shouting "Gare!" was rough; but he managed to tone it down with the bourgeois. His clothing, like that of all coachmen of the second class, consisted of stout boots, heavy with nails, made at Isle-Adam, trousers of bottle-green velveteen, waistcoat of the same, over which he wore, while exercising his functions, a blue blouse, ornamented on the collar, shoulderstraps, and cuffs, with many-colored embroidery. cap with a visor covered his head. His military career had left in Pierrotin's manners and customs a great respect for all social superiority, and a habit of obedience to persons of the upper classes; and though he never willingly mingled with the lesser bourgeoisie, he always respected women in whatever station of life they belonged. Nevertheless, by dint of "trundling the world,"—one of his own expressions,—he had come to look upon those he conveyed as so many walking parcels, who required less care than the inanimate ones,—the essential object of a coaching business.

Warned by the general movement which, since the Peace, was revolutionizing his calling, Pierrotin would not allow himself to be outdone by the progress of new lights. Since the beginning of the summer season he had talked much of a certain large coach, ordered from Farry, Breilmann, and Company, the best makers of diligences, - a purchase necessitated by an increasing influx of travellers. Pierrotin's present establishment consisted of two vehicles. One, which served in winter, and the only one he reported to the tax-gatherer, was the coucou which he inherited from his father. The rounded flanks of this vehicle allowed him to put six travellers on two seats, of metallic hardness in spite of the yellow Utrecht velvet with which they were covered. These seats were separated by a wooden bar inserted in the sides of the carriage at the height of the travellers' shoulders, which could be placed or removed at will. This bar, speciously covered with velvet (Pierrotin called it "a back"), was the despair of the passengers, from the great difficulty they found in placing and removing it. If the "back" was difficult and even painful to handle, that was nothing to the suffering caused to the omoplates when the bar was in place. But when it was left to lie loose across the coach, it made both ingress and egress extremely perilous, especially to women.

Though each seat of this vehicle, with rounded sides like those of a pregnant woman, could rightfully carry only three passengers, it was not uncommon to see eight persons on the two seats jammed together like herrings in a barrel. Pierrotin declared that the travellers were far more comfortable in a solid, immovable mass; whereas when only three were on a seat they banged each other perpetually, and ran much risk of injuring their hats against the roof by the violent jolting of the roads. In front of the vehicle was a wooden bench where Pierrotin sat, on which three travellers could perch; when there, they went, as everybody knows, by the name of rabbits. On certain trips Pierrotin placed four rabbits on the bench, and sat himself at the side, on a sort of box placed below the body of the coach as a foot-rest for the rabbits, which was always full of straw, or of packages that feared no damage. The body of this particular coucou was painted yellow, embellished along the top with a band of barber's blue, on which could be read, on the sides, in silvery white letters, "Isle-Adam, Paris," and across the back, "Line to Isle-Adam."

Our descendants will be mightily mistaken if they fancy that thirteen persons including Pierrotin were all

that this vehicle could carry. On great occasions it could take three more in a square compartment covered with an awning, where the trunks, cases, and packages were piled; but the prudent Pierrotin only allowed his regular customers to sit there, and even they were not allowed to get in until at some distance beyond the barrière. The occupants of the "hen-roost" (the name given by conductors to this section of their vehicles) were made to get down outside of every village or town where there was a post of gendarmerie; the overloading forbidden by law, "for the safety of passengers," being too obvious to allow the gendarme on duty - always a friend to Pierrotin — to avoid the necessity of reporting this flagrant violation of the ordinances. Thus on certain Saturday nights and Monday mornings, Pierrotin's coucou" trundled "fifteen travellers; but on such occasions, in order to drag it along, he gave his stout old horse, called Rougeot, a mate in the person of a little beast no bigger than a pony, about whose merits he had much to say. This little horse was a mare named Bichette; she ate little, she was spirited, she was indefatigable, she was worth her weight in gold.

"My wife would n't give her for that fat lazybones of a Rougeot!" cried Pierrotin, when some traveller would joke him about his epitome of a horse.

The difference between this vehicle and the other consisted chiefly in the fact that the other was on four

wheels. This coach, of comical construction, called the "four-wheel-coach," held seventeen travellers, though it was bound not to carry more than fourteen. It rumbled so noisily that the inhabitants of Isle-Adam frequently said, "Here comes Pierrotin!" when he was scarcely out of the forest which crowns the slope of the valley. It was divided into two lobes, so to speak: one, called the interior, contained six passengers on two seats; the other, a sort of cabriolet constructed in front, was called the coupé. This coupé was closed in with very inconvenient and fantastic glass sashes, a description of which would take too much space to allow of its being given here. The fourwheeled coach was surmounted by a hooded imperial, into which Pierrotin managed to poke six passengers; this space was inclosed by leather curtains. Pierrotin himself sat on an almost invisible seat perched just below the sashes of the coupé.

The master of the establishment paid the tax which was levied upon all public conveyances on his coucou only, which was rated to carry six persons; and he took out a special permit each time that he drove the four-wheeler. This may seem extraordinary in these days, but when the tax on vehicles was first imposed, it was done very timidly, and such deceptions were easily practised by the coach proprietors, always pleased to faire la queue (cheat of their dues) the government

officials, to use the argot of their vocabulary. Gradually the greedy Treasury became severe; it forced all public conveyances not to roll unless they carried two certificates, — one showing that they had been weighed, the other that their taxes were duly paid. All things have their salad days, even the Treasury; and in 1822 those days still lasted. Often in summer, the "fourwheel coach," and the coucou journeyed together, carrying between them thirty-two passengers, though Pierrotin was only paying a tax on six. On these specially lucky days the convoy started from the faubourg Saint-Denis at half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, and arrived gallantly at Isle-Adam by ten at night. Proud of this service, which necessitated the hire of an extra horse, Pierrotin was wont to say:—

"We went at a fine pace!"

But in order to do the twenty-seven miles in five hours with his caravan, he was forced to omit certain stoppages along the road, — at Saint-Brice, Moisselles, and La Cave.

The hôtel du Lion d'Argent occupies a piece of land which is very deep for its width. Though its frontage has only three or four windows on the faubourg Saint-Denis, the building extends back through a long courtyard, at the end of which are the stables, forming a large house standing close against the division wall of the adjoining property. The entrance is through a sort

of passage-way beneath the floor of the second story, in which two or three coaches had room to stand. In 1822 the offices of all the lines of coaches which started from the Lion d'Argent were kept by the wife of the inn-keeper, who had as many books as there were lines. She received the fares, booked the passengers, and stowed away, good-naturedly, in her vast kitchen the various parcels and packages to be transported. Travellers were satisfied with this easy-going, patriarchal system. If they arrived too soon, they seated themselves beneath the hood of the huge kitchen chimney, or stood within the passage-way, or crossed to the Café de l'Échiquier, which forms the corner of the street so named.

In the early days of the autumn of 1822, on a Saturday morning, Pierrotin was standing, with his hands thrust into his pockets through the apertures of his blouse, beneath the porte-cochère of the Lion d'Argent, whence he could see, diagonally, the kitchen of the inn, and through the long court-yard to the stables, which were defined in black at the end of it. Daumartin's diligence had just started, plunging heavily after those of the Touchards. It was past eight o'clock. Under the enormous porch or passage, above which could be read on a long sign, "Hôtel du Lion d'Argent," stood the stablemen and porters of the coaching-lines watching the lively start of the vehicles which deceives so

many travellers, making them believe that the horses will be kept to that vigorous gait.

- "Shall I harness up, master?" asked Pierrotin's hostler, when there was nothing more to be seen along the road.
- "It is a quarter-past eight, and I don't see any travellers," replied Pierrotin. "Where have they poked themselves? Yes, harness up all the same. And there are no parcels either! Twenty good Gods! a fine day like this, and I've only four booked! A pretty state of things for a Saturday! It is always the way when you want money! A dog's life, and a dog's business!"
- "If you had more, where would you put them? There's nothing left but the cabriolet," said the hostler, intending to soothe Pierrotin.
 - "You forget the new coach!" cried Pierrotin.
- "Have you really got it?" asked the man, laughing, and showing a set of teeth as white and broad as almonds.
- "You old good-for-nothing! It starts to-morrow, I tell you; and I want at least eighteen passengers for it."
- "Ha, ha! a fine affair; it'll warm up the road," said the hostler.
- "A coach like that which runs to Beaumont, hey? Flaming! painted red and gold to make Touchard

burst with envy! It takes three horses! I have bought a mate for Rougeot, and Bichette will go finely in unicorn. Come, harness up!" added Pierrotin, glancing out toward the street, and stuffing the tobacco into his clay pipe. "I see a lady and lad over there with packages under their arms; they are coming to the Lion d'Argent, for they've turned a deaf ear to the coucous. Tiens, tiens! seems to me I know that lady for an old customer."

- "You've often started empty, and arrived full," said his porter, still by way of consolation.
- "But no parcels! Twenty good Gods! What a fate!"

And Pierrotin sat down on one of the huge stone posts which protected the walls of the building from the wheels of the coaches; but he did so with an anxious, reflective air that was not habitual with him.

This conversation, apparently insignificant, had stirred up cruel anxieties which were slumbering in his breast. What could there be to trouble the heart of Pierrotin in a fine new coach? To shine upon "the road," to rival the Touchards, to magnify his own line, to carry passengers who would compliment him on the conveniences due to the progress of coach-building, instead of having to listen to perpetual complaints of his sabots (tires of enormous width), — such was Pierrotin's laudable ambition; but, carried away with the

desire to outstrip his comrade on the line, hoping that the latter might some day retire and leave to him alone the transportation to Isle-Adam, he had gone too far. The coach was indeed ordered from Barry, Breilmann, and Company, coach-builders, who had just substituted square English springs for those called "swan-necks," and other old-fashioned French contrivances. But these hard and distrustful manufacturers would only deliver over the diligence in return for coin. Not particularly pleased to build a vehicle which would be difficult to sell if it remained upon their hands, these long-headed dealers declined to undertake it at all until Pierrotin had made a preliminary payment of two thousand To satisfy this precautionary demand, Pierrotin had exhausted all his resources and all his credit. His wife, his father-in-law, and his friends had bled. This superb diligence he had been to see the evening before at the painter's; all it needed now was to be set a-rolling, but to make it roll, payment in full must. alas! be made.

Now, a thousand francs were lacking to Pierrotin, and where to get them he did not know. He was in debt to the master of the Lion d'Argent; he was in danger of losing his two thousand francs already paid to the coach-builder, not counting five hundred for the mate to Rougeot, and three hundred for new harnesses, on which he had a three-months' credit. Driven by the

fury of despair and the madness of vanity, he had just openly declared that the new coach was to start on the morrow. By offering fifteen hundred francs, instead of the two thousand five hundred still due, he was in hopes that the softened carriage-builders would give him his coach. But after a few moments' meditation, his feelings led him to cry out aloud:—

"No! they're dogs! harpies! Suppose I appeal to Monsieur Moreau, the steward at Presles? he is such a kind man," thought Pierrotin, struck with a new idea. "Perhaps he would take my note for six months."

At this moment a footman in livery, carrying a leather portmanteau and coming from the Touchard establishment, where he had gone too late to secure places as far as Chambly, came up and said:—

- "Are you Pierrotin?"
- "Say on," replied Pierrotin.
- "If you would wait a quarter of an hour, you could take my master. If not, I'll carry back the portmanteau and try to find some other conveyance."
- "I'll wait two, three quarters, and throw a little in besides, my lad," said Pierrotin, eying the pretty leather trunk, well buckled, and bearing a brass plate with a coat of arms.
- "Very good; then take this," said the valet, ridding his shoulder of the trunk, which Pierrotin lifted, weighed, and examined.

- "Here," he said to his porter, "wrap it up carefully in soft hay and put it in the boot. There's no name upon it," he added.
 - " Monseigneur's arms are there," replied the valet.
- "Monseigneur! Come and take a glass," said Pierrotin, nodding toward the Café de l'Échiquier, whither he conducted the valet. "Waiter, two absinthes!" he said, as he entered. "Who is your master? and where is he going? I have never seen you before," said Pierrotin to the valet as they touched glasses.
- "There's a good reason for that," said the footman.
 "My master only goes into your parts about once a year, and then in his own carriage. He prefers the valley d'Orge, where he has the most beautiful park in the neighborhood of Paris, a perfect Versailles, a family estate of which he bears the name. Don't you know Monsieur Moreau?"
 - "The steward of Presles?"
- "Yes. Monsieur le Comte is going down to spend a couple of days with him."
- "Ha! then I'm to carry Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy!" cried the coach-proprietor.
- "Yes, my lad, neither more nor less. But listen! here's a special order. If you have any of the country neighbors in your coach you are not to call him Monsieur le comte; he wants to travel en cognito, and told me to be sure to say he would pay a handsome pourboire if he was not recognized."

- "So! Has this secret journey anything to do with the affair which Père Léger, the farmer at the Moulineaux, came to Paris the other day to settle?"
- "I don't know," replied the valet, "but the fat's in the fire. Last night I was sent to the stable to order the Daumont carriage to be ready to go to Presles at seven this morning. But when seven o'clock came, Monsieur le comte countermanded it. Augustin, his valet de chambre, attributes the change to the visit of a lady who called last night, and again this morning,—he thought she came from the country."
- "Could she have told him anything against Monsieur Moreau?—the best of men, the most honest of men, a king of men, hey! He might have made a deal more than he has out of his position, if he'd chosen; I can tell you that."
- "Then he was foolish," answered the valet, sententiously.
- ·"Is Monsieur de Sérizy going to live at Presles at last?" asked Pierrotin; "for you know they have just repaired and refurnished the château. Do you think it is true he has already spent two hundred thousand francs upon it?"
- "If you or I had half what he has spent upon it, you and I would be rich bourgeois. If Madame la comtesse goes there—ha! I tell you what! no more ease and comfort for the Moreaus," said the valet, with an air of mystery.

"He's a worthy man, Monsieur Moreau," remarked Pierrotin, thinking of the thousand francs he wanted to get from the steward. "He is a man who makes others work, but he does n't cheapen what they do; and he gets all he can out of the land - for his master. Honest man! He often comes to Paris and gives me a good fee: he has lots of errands for me to do in Paris; sometimes three or four packages a day, - either from monsieur or from madame. My bill for cartage alone comes to fifty francs a month, more or less. If madame does set up to be somebody, she's fond of her children; and it is I who fetch them from school and take them back; and each time she gives me five francs, - a real great lady couldn't do better than that. And every time I have any one in the coach belonging to them or going to see them. I'm allowed to drive up to the château, - that 's all right, is n't it?"

- "They say Monsieur Moreau was n't worth three thousand francs when Monsieur le comte made him steward of Presles," said the valet.
- "Well, since 1806, there's seventeen years, and the man ought to have made something at any rate."
- "True," said the valet, nodding. "Anyway, masters are very annoying; and I hope, for Moreau's sake, that he has made butter for his bread."
- "I have often been to your house in the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to carry baskets of game," said Pier-

rotin, "but I've never had the advantage, so far of seeing either monsieur or madame."

"Monsieur le comte is a good man," said the footman, confidentially. "But if he insists on your helping to keep up his cognito there's something in the wind. At any rate, so we think at the house; or else, why should he countermand the Daumont, — why travel in a coucou? A peer of France might afford to hire a cabriolet to himself, one would think."

"A cabriolet would cost him forty francs to go there and back; for let me tell you, if you don't know it, that road was only made for squirrels, — up-hill and down, down-hill and up!" said Pierrotin. "Peer of France or bourgeois, they are all looking after the main chance, and saving their money. If this journey concerns Monsieur Moreau, faith, I'd be sorry any harm should come to him! Twenty good Gods! had n't I better find some way of warning him? — for he's a truly good man, a kind man, a king of men, hey!"

"Pooh! Monsieur le comte thinks everything of Monsieur Moreau," replied the valet. "But let me give you a bit of good advice. Every man for himself in this world. We have enough to do to take care of ourselves. Do what Monsieur le comte asks you to do, and all the more because there's no trifling with him. Besides, to tell the truth, the count is generous. If

you oblige him so far," said the valet, pointing half-way down his little finger, "he'll send you on as far as that," stretching out his arm to its full length.

This wise reflection, and the action that enforced it, had the effect, coming from a man who stood as high as second valet to the Comte de Sérizy, of cooling the ardor of Pierrotin for the steward of Presles.

"Well, adieu, Monsieur Pierrotin," said the valet.

A glance rapidly cast on the life of the Comte de Sérizy, and on that of his steward, is here necessary in order to fully understand the little drama now about to take place in Pierrotin's vehicle.

II.

THE STEWARD IN DANGER.

Monsieur Huguet de Sérisy descends in a direct line from the famous president Huguet, ennobled under François I.

This family bears: party per pale or and sable, an orle counterchanged and two lozenges counterchanged, with: i, semper melius eris, — a motto which, together with the two distaffs taken as supporters, proves the modesty of the burgher families in the days when the Orders held their allotted places in the State; and the naïveté of our ancient customs by the pun on eris, which word, combined with the i at the beginning and the final s in melius, forms the name (Sérisy) of the estate from which the family take their title.

The father of the present count was president of a parliament before the Revolution. He himself a councillor of State at the Grand Council of 1787, when he was only twenty-two years of age, was even then distinguished for his admirable memoranda on delicate diplomatic matters. He did not emigrate during the Revolution, and spent that period on his estate of Sérizy near Arpajon, where the respect in which his

father was held protected him from all danger. After spending several years in taking care of the old president, who died in 1794, he was elected about that time to the Council of the Five Hundred, and accepted those legislative functions to divert his mind from his grief. After the 18th Brumaire, Monsieur de Sérizy became, like so many other of the old parliamentary families, an object of the First Consul's blandishment. He was appointed to the Council of State, and received one of the most disorganized departments of the government to reconstruct. This scion of an old historical family proved to be a very active wheel in the grand and magnificent organization which we owe to Napoleon.

The councillor of State was soon called from his particular administration to a ministry. Created count and senator by the Emperor, he was made proconsul to two kingdoms in succession. In 1806, when forty years of age, he married the sister of the ci-devant Marquis de Ronquerolles, the widow at twenty of Gaubert, one of the most illustrious of the Republican generals, who left her his whole property. This marriage, a suitable one in point of rank, doubled the already considerable fortune of the Comte de Sérizy, who became through his wife the brother-in-law of the ci-devant Marquis de Rouvre, made count and chamberlain by the Emperor.

In 1814, weary with constant toil, the Comte de Sérizy, whose shattered health required rest, resigned all his posts, left the department at the head of which the Emperor had placed him, and came to Paris, where Napoleon was compelled by the evidence of his eyes to admit that the count's illness was a valid excuse, though at first that unfatiguable master, who gave no heed to the fatigue of others, was disposed to consider Monsieur de Sérizy's action as a defection. Though the senator was never in disgrace, he was supposed to have reason to complain of Napoleon. quently, when the Bourbons returned, Louis XVIII., whom Monsieur de Sérizy held to be his legitimate sovereign, treated the senator, now a peer of France, with the utmost confidence, placed him in charge of his private affairs, and appointed him one of his cabinet ministers. On the 20th of March, Monsieur de Sérizy did not go to Ghent. He informed Napoleon that he remained faithful to the house of Bourbon; would not accept his peerage during the Hundred Days, and passed that period on his estate at Sérizy.

After the second fall of the Emperor, he became once more a privy-councillor, was appointed vice-president of the Council of State, and liquidator, on behalf of France, of claims and indemnities demanded by foreign powers. Without personal assumption, without ambition even, he possessed great influence in public affairs. Nothing of importance was done without consulting him; but he never went to court, and

was seldom seen in his own salons. This noble life, devoting itself from its very beginning to work, had ended by becoming a life of incessant toil. The count rose at all seasons by four o'clock in the morning, and worked till mid-day, attended to his functions as peer of France and vice-president of the Council of State in the afternoons, and went to bed at nine o'clock. In recognition of such labor, the King had made him a knight of his various Orders. Monsieur de Sérizy had long worn the grand cross of the Legion of honor; he also had the orders of the Golden Fleece, of Saint-Andrew of Russia, that of the Prussian Eagle, and nearly all the lesser Orders of the courts of Europe. No man was less obvious, or more useful in the political world than he. It is easy to understand that the world's honor, the fuss and feathers of public favor, the glories of success were indifferent to a man of this stamp; but no one, unless a priest, ever comes to a life of this kind without some serious underlying reason. His conduct had its cause, and a cruel one.

In love with his wife before he married her, this passion had lasted through all the secret unhappiness of his marriage with a widow, — a woman mistress of herself before as well as after her second marriage, and who used her liberty all the more freely because her husband treated her with the indulgence of a mother for a spoilt child. His constant toil served him as

shield and buckler against pangs of heart which he silenced with the care that diplomatists give to the keeping of secrets. He knew, moreover, how ridiculous was jealousy in the eyes of a society that would never have believed in the conjugal passion of an old statesman. How happened it that from the earliest days of his marriage his wife so fascinated him? Why did he suffer without resistance? How was it that he dared not resist? Why did he let the years go by and still hope on? By what means did this young and pretty and clever woman hold him in bondage?

The answer to all these questions would require a long history, which would injure our present tale. Let us only remark here that the constant toil and grief of the count had unfortunately contributed not a little to deprive him of personal advantages very necessary to a man who attempts to struggle against dangerous com-In fact, the most cruel of the count's secret sorrows was that of causing repugnance to his wife by a malady of the skin resulting solely from excessive labor. Kind, and always considerate of the countess, he allowed her to be mistress of herself and her home. She received all Paris; she went into the country; she returned from it precisely as though she were still a widow. He took care of her fortune and supplied her luxury as a steward might have done. The countess had the utmost respect for her husband. She even admired his turn of mind; she knew how to make him happy by approbation; she could do what she pleased with him by simply going to his study and talking for an hour with him. Like the great seigneurs of the olden time, the count protected his wife so loyally that a single word of disrespect said of her would have been to him an unpardonable injury. The world admired him for this; and Madame de Sérizy owed much to it. Any other woman, even though she came of a family as distinguished as the Ronquerolles, might have found herself degraded in public opinion. The countess was ungrateful, but she mingled a charm with her ingratitude. From time to time she shed a balm upon the wounds of her husband's heart.

Let us now explain the meaning of this sudden journey, and the incognito maintained by a minister of State.

A rich farmer of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Léger, leased and cultivated a farm, the fields of which projected into and greatly injured the magnificent estate of the Comte de Sérizy, called Presles. This farm belonged to a burgher of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Margueron. The lease made to Léger in 1799, at a time when the great advance of agriculture was not foreseen, was about to expire, and the owner of the farm refused all offers from Léger to renew the lease. For some time past, Monsieur de Sérizy, wishing to

rid himself of the annoyances and petty disputes caused by the inclosure of these fields within his land, had desired to buy the farm, having heard that Monsieur Margueron's chief ambition was to have his only son, then a mere tax-gatherer, made special collector of finances at Beaumont. The farmer, who knew he could sell the fields piecemeal to the count at a high price, was ready to pay Margueron even more than he expected from the count.

Thus matters stood when, two days earlier than that of which we write, Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to end the matter, sent for his notary, Alexandre Crottat, and his lawyer, Derville, to examine into all the circumstances of the affair. Though Derville and Crottat threw some doubt on the zeal of the count's steward (a disturbing letter from whom had led to the consultation), Monsieur de Sérizy defended Moreau, who, he said, had served him faithfully for seventeen years.

"Very well!" said Derville, "then I advise your Excellency to go to Presles yourself, and invite this Margueron to dinner. Crottat will send his head-clerk with a deed of sale drawn up, leaving only the necessary lines for description of property and titles in blank. Your Excellency should take with you part of the purchase money in a check on the Bank of France, not forgetting the appointment of the son to the collectorship. If you don't settle the thing at once that

farm will slip through your fingers. You don't know, Monsieur le comte, the trickery of those peasants. Peasants against diplomat, and the diplomat succumbs.

Crottat agreed in this advice, which the count, if we may judge by the valet's statements to Pierrotin, had adopted. The preceding evening he had sent Moreau a line by the diligence to Beaumont, telling him to invite Margueron to dinner in order that they might then and there close the purchase of the farm of Moulineaux.

Before this matter came up, the count had already ordered the château of Presles to be restored and refurnished, and for the last year, Grindot, an architect then in fashion, was in the habit of making it a weekly visit. So, while concluding his purchase of the farm, Monsieur de Sérizy also intended to examine the work of restoration and the effect of the new furniture. He intended all this to be a surprise to his wife when he brought her to Presles, and with this idea in his mind, he had put some personal pride and self-love into the work. How came it therefore that the count, who intended in the evening to drive to Presles openly in his own carriage, should be starting early the next morning incognito in Pierrotin's coucou?

Here a few words on the life of the steward Moreau become indispensable.

Moreau, steward of the estate of Presles, was the son of a provincial attorney who became during the Revolution syndic-attorney at Versailles. In that position, Moreau the father had been the means of almost saving both the lives and property of the Sérizys, father and son. Citizen Moreau belonged to the Danton party; Robespierre, implacable in his hatreds, pursued him, discovered him, and finally had him executed at Versailles. Moreau the son, heir to the doctrines and friendships of his father, was concerned in one of the conspiracies which assailed the First Consul on his accession to power. At this crisis, Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to pay his debt of gratitude, enabled Moreau, lying under sentence of death, to make his escape; in 1804 he asked for his pardon, obtained it, offered him first a place in his government office, and finally took him as private secretary for his own affairs.

Some time after the marriage of his patron Moreau fell in love with the countess's waiting-woman and married her. To avoid the annoyances of the false position in which this marriage placed him (more than one example of which could be seen at the imperial court), Moreau asked the count to give him the management of the Presles estate, where his wife could play the lady in a country region, and neither of them would be made to suffer from wounded self-love. The count wanted a trustworthy man at Presles, for his wife preferred Sérizy, an estate only fifteen miles from Paris. For three or four years Moreau had held the key of

the count's affairs; he was intelligent, and before the Revolution he had studied law in his father's office; so Monsieur de Sérizy granted his request.

"You can never advance in life," he said to Moreau, "for you have broken your neck; but you can be happy, and I will take care that you are so."

He gave Moreau a salary of three thousand francs and his residence in a charming lodge near the château, all the wood he needed from the timber that was cut on the estate, oats, hay, and straw for two horses, and a right to whatever he wanted of the produce of the gardens. A sub-prefect is not as well provided for.

During the first eight years of his stewardship, Moreau managed the estate conscientiously; he took an interest in it. The count, coming down now and then to examine the property, pass judgment on what had been done, and decide on new purchases, was struck with Moreau's evident loyalty, and showed his satisfaction by liberal gifts.

But after the birth of Moreau's third child, a daughter, he felt himself so securely settled in all his comforts at Presles that he ceased to attribute to Monsieur de Sérizy those enormous advantages. About the year 1816, the steward, who until then had only taken what he needed for his own use from the estate, accepted a sum of twenty-five thousand francs from a wood-merchant as an inducement to lease to the latter,

for twelve years, the cutting of all the timber. Moreau argued thus: he could have no pension; he was the father of a family; the count really owed him that sum as a gift after ten years' management; already the legitimate possessor of sixty thousand francs in savings, if he added this sum to that, he could buy a farm worth a hundred and twenty-five thousand francs in Champagne, a township just above Isle-Adam, on the right bank of the Oise. Political events prevented both the count and the neighboring country-people from becoming aware of this investment, which was made in the name of Madame Moreau, who was understood to have inherited property from an aunt of her father.

As soon as the steward had tasted the delightful fruit of the possession of property, he began, all the while maintaining toward the world an appearance of the utmost integrity, to lose no occasion of increasing his fortune clandestinely; the interests of his three children served as a poultice to the wounds of his honor. Nevertheless, we ought in justice to say that while he accepted casks of wine, and took care of himself in all the purchases that he made for the count, yet according to the terms of the Code he remained an honest man, and no proof could have been found to justify an accusation against him. According to the jurisprudence of the least thieving cook in Paris, he shared with the count in the profits due to his own

capable management. This manner of swelling his fortune was simply a case of conscience, that was all. Alert, and thoroughly understanding the count's interests, Moreau watched for opportunities to make good purchases all the more eagerly, because he gained a larger percentage on them. Presles returned a revenue of seventy thousand francs net. It was a saying of the country-side for a circuit of thirty miles:—

"Monsieur de Sérizy has a second self in Moreau."

Being a prudent man, Moreau invested yearly, after 1817, both his profits and his salary on the Grand Livre, piling up his heap with the utmost secrecy. He often refused proposals on the plea of want of money; and he played the poor man so successfully with the count that the latter gave him the means to send both his sons to the school Henri IV. At the present moment Moreau was worth one hundred and twenty thou sand francs of capital invested in the Consolidated thirds, now paying five per cent, and quoted at eighty francs. These carefully hidden one hundred and twenty thousand francs, and his farm at Champagne, enlarged by subsequent purchases, amounted to a fortune of about two hundred and eighty thousand francs, giving him an income of some sixteen thousand.

Such was the position of the steward at the time when the Comte de Sérizy desired to purchase the farm of Moulineaux, — the ownership of which was indis-

pensable to his comfort. This farm consisted of ninetysix parcels of land bordering the estate of Presles, and frequently running into it, producing the most annoying discussions as to the trimming of hedges and ditches and the cutting of trees. Any other than a cabinet minister would probably have had scores of lawsuits on his hands. Père Léger only wished to buy the property in order to sell to the count at a handsome advance. In order to secure the exorbitant sum on which his mind was set, the farmer had long endeavored to come to an understanding with Moreau. pelled by circumstances, he had, only three days before this critical Saturday, had a talk with the steward in . the open field, and proved to him clearly that he (Moreau) could make the count invest his money at two and a half per cent, and thus appear to serve his patron's interests, while he himself pocketed forty thousand francs which Léger offered him to bring about the transaction.

"I tell you what," said the steward to his wife, as he went to bed that night, "if I make fifty thousand francs out of the Moulineaux affair, — and I certainly shall, for the count will give me ten thousand as a fee, — we'll retire to Isle-Adam and live in the Pavillon de Nogent."

This pavillon was a charming place, originally built by the Prince de Conti for a mistress, and in it every convenience and luxury had been placed. "That will suit me," said his wife. "The Dutchman who lives there has put it in good order, and now that he is obliged to return to India, he would probably let us have it for thirty thousand francs."

"We shall be close to Champagne," said Moreau.
"I am in hopes of buying the farm and mill of Mours for a hundred thousand francs. That would give us ten thousand a year in rentals. Nogent is one of the most delightful residences in the valley; and we should still have an income of ten thousand from the Grand-Livre."

"But why don't you ask for the post of juge-de-paix at Isle-Adam? That would give us influence, and fifteen hundred a year salary."

"Well, I did think of it."

With these plans in mind, Moreau, as soon as he heard from the count that he was coming to Presles, and wished him to invite Margueron to dinner on Saturday, sent off an express to the count's head-valet, inclosing a letter to his master, which the messenger failed to deliver before Monsieur de Sérizy retired at his usually early hour. Augustin, however, placed it, according to custom in such cases, on his master's desk. In this letter Moreau begged the count not to trouble himself to come down, but to trust entirely to him. He added that Margueron was no longer willing to sell the whole in one block, and talked of cutting the farm

up into a number of small lots. It was necessary to circumvent this plan, and perhaps, added Moreau, it might be best to employ a third party to make the purchase.

Everybody has enemies in this life. Now the steward and his wife had wounded the feelings of a retired army officer, Monsieur de Reybert, and his wife, who were living near Presles. From speeches like pin-pricks, matters had advanced to dagger-thrusts. Monsieur de Reybert breathed vengeance. He was determined to make Moreau lose his situation and gain it himself. The two ideas were twins. Thus the proceedings of the steward, spied upon for two years, were no secret to Reybert. The same conveyance that took Moreau's letter to the count conveyed Madame de Reybert, whom her husband despatched to Paris. There she asked with such earnestness to see the count that although she was sent away at nine o'clock, he having then gone to bed, she was ushered into his study the next morning at seven.

"Monsieur," she said to the cabinet-minister, "we are incapable, my husband and I, of writing anonymous letters, therefore I have come to see you in person. I am Madame de Reybert, née de Corroy. My husband is a retired officer, with a pension of six hundred francs, and we live at Presles, where your steward has offered us insult after insult, although we

are persons of good station. Monsieur de Reybert, who is not an intriguing man, far from it, is a captain of artillery, retired in 1816, having served twenty years, — always at a distance from the Emperor, Monsieur le comte. You know of course how difficult it is for soldiers who are not under the eve of their master to obtain promotion, - not counting that the integrity and frankness of Monsieur de Reybert were displeasing to his superiors. My husband has watched your steward for the last three years, being aware of his dishonesty and intending to have him lose his place. We are, as you see, quite frank with you. Moreau has made us his enemies, and we have watched him. I have come to tell you that you are being tricked in the purchase of the Molineaux farm. They mean to get an extra hundred thousand francs out of you, which are to be divided between the notary, the farmer Léger, and Moreau. You have written Moreau to invite Margueron, and you are going to Presles to-day; but Margueron will be ill, and Léger is so certain of buying the farm that he is now in Paris to draw the money. If we have enlightened you as to what is going on, and if you want an upright steward you will take my husband; though noble, he will serve you as he has served the State. Your steward has made a fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs out of his place; he is not to be pitied therefore."

The count thanked Madame de Reybert coldly, bestowing upon her the holy-water of courts, for he despised backbiting; but for all that, he remembered Derville's doubts, and felt inwardly shaken. Just then he saw his steward's letter and read it. In its assurances of devotion and its respectful reproaches for the distrust implied in wishing to negotiate the purchase for himself, he read the truth.

"Corruption has come to him with fortune, — as it always does!" he said to himself.

The count then made several inquiries of Madame de Reybert, less to obtain information than to gain time to observe her; and he wrote a short note to his notary telling him not to send his head-clerk to Presles as requested, but to come there himself in time for dinner.

"Though Monsieur le comte," said Madame de Reybert in conclusion, "may have judged me unfavorably for the step I have taken unknown to my husband, he ought to be convinced that we have obtained this information about his steward in a natural and nonorable manner; the most sensitive conscience canuot take exception to it."

So saying, Madame de Reybert, née de Corroy, stood erect as a pike-staff. She presented to the rapid investigation of the count a face seamed with the small-pox like a colander with holes, a flat, spare figure, two light and eager eyes, fair hair plastered down upon

an anxious forehead, a small drawn-bonnet of faded green taffetas lined with pink, a white gown with violet spots, and leather shoes. The count recognized the wife of some poor, half-pay captain, a puritan, subscribing no doubt to the "Courrier Français," earnest in virtue, but aware of the comfort of a good situation and eagerly coveting it.

- "You say your husband has a pension of six hundred frames," he said, replying to his own thoughts, and not to the remark Madame de Reybert had just made.
 - "Yes, monsieur."
 - "You were born a Corroy?"
- "Yes, monsieur, a noble family of Metz, where my husband belongs."
 - "In what regiment did Monsieur de Reybert serve?"
 - "The 7th artillery."
 - "Good!" said the count, writing down the number.

He had thought at one time of giving the management of the estate to some retired army officer, about whom he could obtain exact information from the minister of war.

"Madame," he resumed, ringing for his valet, "return to Presles, this afternoon with my notary, who is going down there for dinner, and to whom I have recommended you. Here is his address. I am going myself secretly to Presles, and will send for Monsieur de Reybert to come and speak to me."

It will thus be seen that Monsieur de Sérizy's journey by a public conveyance, and the injunction conveyed by the valet to conceal his name and rank had not unnecessarily alarmed Pierrotin. That worthy had just forebodings of a danger which was about to swoop down upon one of his best customers.

III.

THE TRAVELLERS.

As Pierrotin issued from the Café de l'Échiquier, after treating the valet, he saw in the gate-way of the Lion d'Argent the lady and the young man in whom his perspicacity at once detected customers, for the lady with outstretched neck and anxious face was evidently looking for him. She was dressed in a blacksilk gown that was dyed, a brown bonnet, an old French cashmere shawl, raw-silk stockings, and low shoes; and in her hand she carried a straw bag and a blue umbrella. This woman, who had once been beautiful, seemed to be about forty years of age; but her blue eyes, deprived of the fire which happiness puts there, told plainly that she had long renounced the world. Her dress, as well as her whole air and manner, indicated a mother wholly devoted to her household and her son. If the strings of her bonnet were faded, the shape betrayed that it was several years old. The shawl was fastened by a broken needle converted into a pin by a head of sealing-wax. She was waiting impatiently for Pierrotin, wishing to recommend to his special care her son, who was doubtless travelling for the first time, and with whom she had come to the coach-office as much from doubt of his ability as from maternal affection.

This mother was in a way completed by the son, so that the son would not be understood without the mother. If the mother condemned herself to mended gloves, the son wore an olive-green coat with sleeves too short for him, proving that he had grown, and might grow still more, like other adults of eighteen or nineteen years of age. The blue trousers, mended by his mother, presented to the eye a brighter patch of color when the coat-tails maliciously parted behind him.

- "Don't rub your gloves that way, you'll spoil them," she was saying as Pierrotin appeared. "Is this the conductor? Ah! Pierrotin, is it you?" she exclaimed, leaving her son and taking the coachman apart a few steps.
- "I hope you're well, Madame Clapart," he replied, with an air that expressed both respect and familiarity.
- "Yes, Pierrotin, very well. Please take good care of my Oscar; he is travelling alone for the first time."
- "Oh! so he is going alone to Monsieur Moreau!" cried Pierrotin, for the purpose of finding out whether he were really going there.
 - "Yes," said the mother.
- "Then Madame Moreau is willing?" returned Pierrotin, with a sly look.

"Ah!" said the mother, "it will not be all roses for him, poor child! But his future absolutely requires that I should send him."

This answer struck Pierrotin, who hesitated to confide his fears for the steward to Madame Clapart, while she, on her part, was afraid of injuring her boy if she asked Pierrotin for a care which might have transformed him into a mentor. During this short deliberation, which was ostensibly covered by a few phrases as to the weather, the journey, and the stopping-places along the road, we will ourselves explain what were the ties that united Madame Clapart with Pierrotin, and authorized the two confidential remarks which they have just exchanged.

Often—that is to say, three or four times a month—Pierrotin, on his way to Paris, would find the steward on the road near La Cave. As soon as the vehicle came up, Moreau would sign to a gardener, who, with Pierrotin's help, would put upon the coach either one or two baskets containing the fruits and vegetables of the season, chickens, eggs, butter, and game. The steward always paid the carriage and Pierrotin's fee, adding the money necessary to pay toll at the barrière, if the baskets contained anything dutiable. These baskets, hampers, or packages, were never directed to any one. On the first occasion, which served for all others, the steward had given Madame Clapart's ad-

dress by word of mouth to the discreet Pierrotin, requesting him never to deliver to others the precious packages. Pierrotin, impressed with the idea of an intrigue between the steward and some pretty girl, had gone as directed to number 7 rue de la Cerisaie, in the Arsenal quarter, and had there found the Madame Clapart just portrayed, instead of the young and beautiful creature he expected to find.

The drivers of public conveyances and carriers are called by their business to enter many homes, and to be cognizant of many secrets; but social accident, that sub-providence, having willed that they be without education and devoid of the talent of observation, it follows that they are not dangerous. Nevertheless, at the end of a few months, Pierrotin was puzzled to explain the exact relations of Monsieur Moreau and Madame Clapart from what he saw of the household in the rue de la Cerisaie. Though lodgings were not dear at that time in the Arsenal quarter, Madame Clapart lived on a third floor at the end of a court-yard, in a house which was formerly that of a great family, in the days when the higher nobility of the kingdom lived on the ancient site of the Palais des Tournelles and the hôtel Saint-Paul. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the great seigneurs divided among themselves these vast spaces, once occupied by the gardens of the kings of France, as indicated by the present names of

the streets, — Cerisaie, Beautreillis, des Lions, etc. Madame Clapart's apartment, which was panelled throughout with ancient carvings, consisted of three connecting rooms, a dining-room, salon, and bedroom. Above it was the kitchen, and a bedroom for Oscar. Opposite to the entrance, on what is called in Paris le carré, — that is, the square landing, — was the door of a back room, opening, on every floor, into a sort of tower built of rough stone, in which was also the well for the staircase. This was the room in which Moreau slept whenever he went to Paris.

Pierrotin had seen in the first room, where he deposited the hampers, six wooden chairs with straw seats, a table, and a sideboard; at the windows, discolored curtains. Later, when he entered the salon, he noticed some old Empire furniture, now shabby; but only as much as all proprietors exact to secure their rent. Pierrotin judged of the bedroom by the salon and The wood-work, painted coarsely of a dining-room reddish white, which thickened and blurred the mouldings and figurines, far from being ornamental, was distressing to the eye. The floors, never waxed, were of that gray tone we see in boarding-schools. When Pierrotin came upon Monsieur and Madame Clapart at their meals he saw that their china, glass, and all other little articles betrayed the utmost poverty; and yet, though the chipped and mended dishes and tureens

were those of the poorest families and provoked pity, the forks and spoons were of silver.

Monsieur Clapart, clothed in a shabby surtout, his feet in broken slippers, always wore green spectacles, and exhibited, whenever he removed his shabby cap of a bygone period, a pointed skull, from the top of which trailed a few dirty filaments which even a poet could scarcely call hair. This man, of wan complexion, seemed timorous, but withal tyrannical.

In this dreary apartment, which faced the north and had no other outlook than to a vine on the opposite wall and a well in the corner of the yard, Madame Clapart bore herself with the airs of a queen, and moved like a woman unaccustomed to go anywhere on foot. Often, while thanking Pierrotin, she gave him glances which would have touched to pity an intelligent observer; from time to time she would slip a twelve-sous piece into his hand, and then her voice was charming. Pierrotin had never seen Oscar, for the reason that the boy was always in school at the time his business took him to the house.

Here is the sad story which Pierrotin could never have discovered, even by asking for information, as he sometimes did, from the portress of the house; for that individual knew nothing beyond the fact that the Claparts paid a rent of two hundred and fifty francs a year, had no servant but a charwoman who came daily for a few hours in the morning, that Madame Clapart did some of her smaller washing herself, and paid the postage on her letters daily, being apparently unable to let the sum accumulate.

There does not exist, or rather, there seldom exists, a criminal who is wholly criminal. Neither do we ever meet with a dishonest nature which is completely dishonest. It is possible for a man to cheat his master to his own advantage, or rake in for himself alone all the hay in the manger, but, even while laying up capital by actions more or less illicit, there are few men who never do good ones. If only from self-love, curiosity, or by way of variety, or by chance, every man has his moment of beneficence; he may call it his error, he may never do it again, but he sacrifices to Goodness, as the most surly man sacrifices to the Graces once or twice in his life. If Moreau's faults can ever be excused, it might be on the score of his persistent kindness in succoring a poor woman of whose favors he had once been proud, and in whose house he was hidden when in peril of his life.

This woman, celebrated under the Directory for her liaison with one of the five kings of that reign, married, through that all-powerful protection, a purveyor who was making his millions out of the government, and whom Napoleon ruined in 1802. This man, named Husson, became insane through his sudden fall from op-

ulence to penury; he flung himself into the Seine, leaving the beautiful Madame Husson pregnant. Moreau, very intimately allied with Madame Husson, was at that time condemned to death; he was unable therefore to marry the widow, being forced to leave France. Madame Husson, then twenty-two years old, married in her deep distress a government clerk named Clapart, aged twenty-seven, who was said to be a rising man. At that period of our history, government clerks were apt to become persons of importance; for Napoleon was ever on the lookout for capacity. But Clapart, though endowed by nature with a certain coarse beauty, proved to have no intelligence. Thinking Madame Husson very rich, he feigned a great passion for her. and was simply saddled with the impossibility of satisfying either then or in the future the wants she had acquired in a life of opulence. He filled, very poorly. a place in the Treasury that gave him a salary of eighteen hundred francs; which was all the new household had to live on. When Moreau returned to France as the secretary of the Comte de Sérizy he heard of Madame Husson's pitiable condition, and he was able, before his own marriage, to get her an appointment as head-waiting-woman to Madame Mère, the Emperor's mother. But in spite of that powerful protection Clapart was never promoted; his incapacity was too apparent.

Ruined in 1815 by the fall of the Empire, the brilliant Aspasia of the Directory had no other resources than Clapart's salary of twelve hundred francs from a clerkship obtained for him through the Comte de Sérizy. Moreau, the only protector of a woman whom he had known in possession of millions, obtained a half-scholarship for her son, Oscar Husson, at the school of Henri IV.; and he sent her regularly, by Pierrotin, such supplies from the estate at Presles as he could decently offer to a household in distress.

Oscar was the whole life and all the future of his mother. The poor woman could now be reproached with no other fault than her exaggerated tenderness for her boy,—the bête-noire of his step-father. Oscar was, unfortunately, endowed by nature with a foolishness his mother did not perceive, in spite of the step-father's sarcasms. This foolishness—or, to speak more specifically, this overweening conceit—so troubled Monsieur Moreau that he begged Madame Clapart to send the boy down to him for a month that he might study his character, and find out what career he was fit for. Moreau was really thinking of some day proposing Oscar to the count as his successor.

But to give to the devil and to God what respectively belongs to them, perhaps it would be well to show the causes of Oscar Husson's silly self-conceit, premising that he was born in the household of Madame Mère. During his early childhood his eyes were dazzled by imperial splendors. His pliant imagination retained the impression of those gorgeous scenes, and nursed the images of a golden time of pleasure in hopes of recovering them. The natural boastfulness of schoolboys (possessed of a desire to outshine their mates) resting on these memories of his childhood was developed in him beyond all measure. It may also have been that his mother at home dwelt too fondly on the days when she herself was a queen in Directorial Paris. At any rate, Oscar, who was now leaving school, had been made to bear many humiliations which the paying pupils put upon those who hold scholarships, unless the scholars are able to impose respect by superior physical ability.

This mixture of former splendor now departed, of beauty gone, of blind maternal love, of sufferings heroically borne, made the mother one of those pathetic figures which catch the eye of many an observer in Paris.

Incapable, naturally, of understanding the real attachment of Moreau to this woman, or that of the woman for the man she had saved in 1797, now her only friend, Pierrotin did not think it best to communicate the suspicion that had entered his head as to some danger which was threatening Moreau. The valet's speech, "We have enough to do in this world

to look after ourselves," returned to his mind, and with it came that sentiment of obedience to what he called the *chefs de file*,—the front-rank men in war, and men of rank in peace. Besides, just now Pierrotin's head was as full of his own stings as there are five-franc pieces in a thousand francs. So that the "Very good, madame," "Certainly, madame," with which he replied to the poor mother, to whom a trip of twenty miles appeared a journey, showed plainly that he desired to get away from her useless and prolix instructions.

- "You will be sure to place the packages so that they cannot get wet if the weather should happen to change."
- "I've a hood," replied Pierrotin. "Besides, see. madame, with what care they are being placed."
- "Oscar, don't stay more than two weeks, no matter how much they may ask you," continued Madame Clapart, returning to her son. "You can't please Madame Moreau, whatever you do; besides, you must be home by the end of September. We are to go to Belleville, you know, to your uncle Cardot."
 - "Yes, mamma."
- "Above all," she said, in a low voice, "be sure never to speak about servants; keep thinking all the time that Madame Moreau was once a waiting-maid."

[&]quot;Yes, mamma."

Oscar, like all youths whose vanity is excessively ticklish, seemed annoyed at being lectured on the threshold of the Lion d'Argent.

"Well, now good-bye, mamma. We shall start soon; there's the horse all harnessed."

The mother, forgetting that she was in the open street, embraced her Oscar, and said, smiling, as she took a little roll from her basket:—

"Tiens! you were forgetting your roll and the chocolate! My child, once more, I repeat, don't take anything at the inns; they'd make you pay for the slightest thing ten times what it is worth."

Oscar would fain have seen his mother farther off as she stuffed the bread and chocolate into his pocket. The scene had two witnesses, — two young men a few years older than Oscar, better dressed than he, without a mother hanging on to them, whose actions, dress, and ways all betokened that complete independence which is the one desire of a lad still tied to his mother's apron-strings.

"He said mamma!" cried one of the new-comers, laughing.

The words reached Oscar's ears and drove him to say, "Good-bye, mother!" in a tone of terrible impatience.

Let us admit that Madame Clapart spoke too loudly, and seemed to wish to show to those around them her tenderness for the boy.

"What is the matter with you, Oscar?" asked the poor hurt woman. "I don't know what to make of you," she added in a severe tone, fancying herself able to inspire him with respect,—a great mistake made by those who spoil their children. "Listen, my Oscar," she said, resuming at once her tender voice, "you have a propensity to talk, and to tell all you know, and all that you don't know; and you do it to show off, with the foolish vanity of a mere lad. Now, I repeat, endeavor to keep your tongue in check. You are not sufficiently advanced in life, my treasure, to be able to judge of the persons with whom you may be thrown; and there is nothing more dangerous than to talk in public conveyances. Besides, in a diligence well-bred persons always keep silence."

The two young men, who seemed to have walked to the farther end of the establishment, here returned, making their boot-heels tap upon the paved passage of the porte-cochère. They might have heard the whole of this maternal homily. So, in order to rid himself of his mother, Oscar had recourse to an heroic measure, which proved how vanity stimulates the intellect.

"Mamma," he said, "you are standing in a draught, and you may take cold. Besides, I am going to get into the coach."

The lad must have touched some tender spot, for his mother caught him to her bosom, kissed him as if he were starting upon a long journey, and went with him to the vehicle with tears in her eyes.

"Don't forget to give five francs to the servants when you come away," she said; "write me three times at least during the fifteen days; behave properly, and remember all that I have told you. You have linen enough; don't send any to the wash. Above all, remember Monsieur Moreau's kindness; mind him as you would a father, and follow his advice."

As he got into the coach, Oscar's blue woollen stockings became visible, through the action of his trousers which drew up suddenly, also the new patch in the said trousers was seen, through the parting of his coat-tails. The smiles of the two young men, on whom these signs of an honorable indigence were not lost, were so many fresh wounds to the lad's vanity.

"The first place was engaged for Oscar," said the mother to Pierrotin. "Take the back seat," she said to the boy, looking fondly at him with a loving smile.

Oh! how Oscar regretted that trouble and sorrow had destroyed his mother's beauty, and that poverty and self-sacrifice prevented her from being better dressed! One of the young men, the one who wore top-boots and spurs, nudged the other to make him take notice of Oscar's mother, and the other twirled his moustache with a gesture which signified,—

[&]quot;Rather pretty figure!"

- "How shall I ever get rid of mamma?" thought Oscar.
 - "What's the matter?" asked Madame Clapart.

Oscar pretended not to hear, the monster! Perhaps Madame Clapart was lacking in tact under the circumstances; but all absorbing sentiments have so much egotism!

- "Georges, do you like children when travelling?" asked one young man of the other.
- "Yes, my good Amaury, if they are weaned, and are named Oscar, and have chocolate."

These speeches were uttered in half-tones to allow Oscar to hear them or not hear them as he chose; his countenance was to be the weather-gauge by which the other young traveller could judge how much fun he might be able to get out of the lad during the journey. Oscar chose not to hear. He looked to see if his mother, who weighed upon him like a nightmare, was still there, for he felt that she loved him too well to leave him so quickly. Not only did he involuntarily compare the dress of his travelling companion with his own, but he felt that his mother's toilet counted for much in the smiles of the two young men.

"If they would only take themselves off!" he said to himself.

Instead of that, Amaury remarked to Georges, giving a tap with his cane to the heavy wheel of the coucou;

"And so, my friend, you are really going to trust your future to this fragile bark?"

"I must," replied Georges, in a tone of fatalism.

Oscar gave a sigh as he remarked the jaunty manner in which his companion's hat was stuck on one ear for the purpose of showing a magnificent head of blond hair beautifully brushed and curled; while he, by order of his step-father, had his black hair cut like a clothesbrush across the forehead, and clipped, like a soldier's, close to the head.. The face of the vain lad was round and chubby and bright with the hues of health, while that of his fellow-traveller was long, and delicate, and pale. The forehead of the latter was broad, and his chest filled out a waistcoat of a cashmere pattern. As Oscar admired the tight-fitting iron-gray trousers and the overcoat with its frogs and olives clasping the waist, it seemed to him that this romantic-looking stranger. gifted with such advantages, insulted him by his superiority, just as an ugly woman feels injured by the mere sight of a pretty one. The click of the stranger's bootheels offended his taste and echoed in his heart. He felt as hampered by his own clothes (made no doubt at home out of those of his step-father) as that envied young man seemed at ease in his.

"That fellow must have heaps of francs in his trousers pocket," thought Oscar.

The young man turned round. What were Oscar's

feelings on beholding a gold chain round his neck, at the end of which no doubt was a gold watch! From that moment the young man assumed, in Oscar's eyes, the proportions of a personage.

Living in the rue de la Cerisaie since 1815, taken to and from school by his step-father, Oscar had no other points of comparison since his adolescence than the poverty-stricken household of his mother. Brought up strictly, by Moreau's advice, he seldomwent to the theatre, and then to nothing better than the Ambigu-Comique, where his eyes could see little elegance, if indeed the eyes of a child riveted on a melodrama were likely to examine the audience. His step-father still wore, after the fashion of the Empire, his watch in the fob of his trousers, from which there depended over his abdomen a heavy gold chain, ending in a bunch of heterogeneous ornaments, seals, and a watch-key with a round top and flat sides, on which was a landscape in mosaic. Oscar, who considered that old-fashioned finery as the ne plus ultra of adornment, was bewildered by the present revelation of superior. and negligent elegance. The young man exhibited, offensively, a pair of spotless gloves, and seemed to wish to dazzle Oscar by twirling with much grace a gold-headed switch cane.

Oscar had reached that last quarter of adolescence when little things cause immense joys and immense

miseries, - a period when youth prefers misfortune to a ridiculous suit of clothes, and caring nothing for the real interests of life, torments itself about frivolities, about neckcloths, and the passionate desire to appear a Then the young fellow swells himself out; his swagger is all the more portentous because it is exercised on nothings. Yet if he envies a fool who is elegantly dressed, he is also capable of enthusiasm over talent, and of genuine admiration for genius. defects as these, when they have no root in the heart, prove only the exuberance of sap, — the richness of the youthful imagination. That a lad of nineteen, an only child, kept severely at home by poverty, adored by a mother who put upon herself all privations for his sake, should be moved to envy by a young man of twenty-two in a frogged surtout-coat silk-lined, a waistcoat of fancy cashmere, and a cravat slipped through a ring of the worst taste, is nothing more than a peccadillo committed in all ranks of social life by inferiors who envy those that seem beyond them. Men of genius themselves succumb to this primitive passion. Did not Rousseau admire Ventura and Bacle?

But Oscar passed from peccadillo to evil feelings. He felt humiliated; he was angry with the youth he envied, and there rose in his heart a secret desire to show openly that he himself was as good as the object of his envy.

The two young fellows continued to walk up and down from the gate to the stables, and from the stables to the gate. Each time they turned they looked at Oscar curled up in his corner of the *coucou*. Oscar, persuaded that their jokes and laughter concerned himself, affected the utmost indifference. He began to hum the chorus of a song lately brought into vogue by the liberals, which ended with the words, "T is Voltaire's fault, 't is Rousseau's fault."

"Tiens! perhaps he is one of the chorus at the Opera," said Amaury.

This exasperated Oscar, who bounded up, pulled out the wooden "back," and called to Pierrotin:—

- "When do we start?"
- "Presently," said that functionary, who was standing, whip in hand, and gazing toward the rue d'Enghien.

At this moment the scene was enlivened by the arrival of a young man accompanied by a true gamin, who was followed by a porter dragging a hand-cart. The young man came up to Pierrotin and spoke to him confidentially, on which the latter nodded his head, and called to his own porter. The man ran out and helped to unload the little hand-cart, which contained, besides two trunks, buckets, brushes, boxes of singular shape, and an infinity of packages and utensils which the youngest of the new-comers, who had climbed into the imperial, stowed away with such celerity that Oscar,

who happened to be smiling at his mother, now stationed on the other side of the street, saw none of the paraphernalia which might have revealed to him the profession of his new travelling-companions.

. The gamin, who must have been sixteen years of age, wore a gray blouse buckled round his waist by a polished leather belt. His cap, jauntily perched on the side of his head, seemed the sign of a merry nature, and so did the picturesque disorder of the curly brown hair which fell upon his shoulders. A black-silk cravat drew a line round his very white neck, and added to the vivacity of his bright grav eyes. The animation of his brown and rosy face, the moulding of his rather large lips, the ears detached from his head, his slightly turned-up nose, -in fact, all the details of his face proclaimed the lively spirit of a Figaro, and the careless gayety of youth, while the vivacity of his gesture and his mocking eye revealed an intellect already developed by the practice of a profession adopted very early in life. As he had already some claims to personal value, this child, made man by Art or by vocation, seemed indifferent to the question of costume; for he looked at his boots, which had not been polished, with a quizzical air, and searched for the spots on his brown Holland trousers less to remove them than to see their effect.

"I'm in style," he said, giving himself a shake and addressing his companion.

The glance of the latter, showed authority over his adept, in whom a practised eye would at once have recognized the joyous pupil of a painter, called in the argot of the studios a rapin.

"Behave yourself, Mistigris," said his master, giving him the nickname which the studio had no doubt bestowed upon him.

The master was a slight and pale young man, with extremely thick black hair, worn in a disorder that was actually fantastic. But this abundant mass of hair seemed necessary to an enormous head, whose vast forehead proclaimed a precocious intellect. A strained and harassed face, too original to be ugly, was hollowed as if this noticeable young man suffered from some chronic malady, or from privations caused by poverty (the most terrible of all chronic maladies), or from griefs too recent to be forgotten. His clothing, analogous, with due allowance, to that of Mistigris, consisted of a shabby surtout coat, American-green in color, much worn, but clean and well-brushed; a black waistcoat buttoned to the throat, which almost concealed a scarlet neckerchief; and trousers, also black and even more worn than the coat, flapping his thin legs. In addition, a pair of very muddy boots indicated that he had come on foot and from some distance to the coach office. With a rapid look this artist seized the whole scene of the Lion d'Argent, the

stables, the courtyard, the various lights and shades, and the details; then he looked at Mistigris, whose satirical glance had followed his own.

- "Charming!" said Mistigris.
- "Yes, very," replied the other.
- "We seem to have got here too early," pursued Mistigris. "Could n't we get a mouthful somewhere? My stomach, like Nature, abhors a vacuum."
- "Have we time to get a cup of coffee?" said the artist, in a gentle voice, to Pierrotin.
 - "Yes, but don't be long," answered the latter.
- "Good; that means we have a quarter of an hour," remarked Mistigris, with the innate genius for observation of the Paris *rapin*.

The pair disappeared. Nine o'clock was striking in the hotel kitchen. Georges thought it just and reasonable to remonstrate with Pierrotin.

- "Hey! my friend; when a man is blessed with such wheels as these (striking the clumsy tires with his cane) he ought at least to have the merit of punctuality. The deuce! one doesn't get into that thing for pleasure; I have business that is devilishly pressing or I wouldn't trust my bones to it. And that horse, which you call Rougeot, he doesn't look likely to make up for lost time."
- "We are going to harness Bichette while those gentlemen take their coffee," replied Pierrotin. "Go and

ask, you," he said to his porter, if Père Léger is coming with us —"

- "Where is your Père Léger?" asked Georges.
- "Over the way, at number 50. He couldn't get a place in the Beaumont diligence," said Pierrotin, still speaking to his porter and apparently making no answer to his customer; then he disappeared himself in search of Bichette.

Georges, after shaking hands with his friend, got into the coach, handling with an air of great importance a portfolio which he placed beneath the cushion of the seat. He took the opposite corner to that of Oscar, on the same seat.

- "This Père Léger troubles me," he said.
- "They can't take away our places," replied Oscar. "I have number one."
 - "And I number two," said Georges.

Just as Pierrotin reappeared, having harnessed Bichette, the porter returned with a stout man in tow, whose weight could not have been less than two hundred and fifty pounds at the very least. Père Léger belonged to the species of farmer which has a square back, a protuberant stomach, a powdered pigtail, and wears a little coat of blue linen. His white gaiters, coming above the knee, were fastened round the ends of his velveteen breeches and secured by silver buckles. His hob-nailed shoes weighed two pounds each. In

his hand, he held a small reddish stick, much polished, with a large knob, which was fastened round his wrist by a thong of leather.

- "And you are called Père Léger?" asked Georges, very seriously, as the farmer attempted to put a foot on the step.
- "At your service," replied the farmer, looking in and showing a face like that of Louis XVIII., with fat, rubicund cheeks, from between which issued a nose that in any other face would have seemed enormous. His smiling eyes were sunken in rolls of fat. "Come, a helping hand, my lad!" he said to Pierrotin.

The farmer was hoisted in by the united efforts of Pierrotin and the porter, to cries of, "Houp la! hi! ha! hoist!" uttered by Georges.

"Oh! I'm not going far; only to La Cave," said the farmer, good-humoredly.

In France everybody takes a joke.

- "Take the back seat," said Pierrotin, "there'll be six of you."
- "Where's your other horse?" demanded Georges. "Is it as mythical as the third posthorse?"
- "There she is," said Pierrotin, pointing to the little mare, who was coming along alone.
 - "He calls that insect a horse!" exclaimed Georges.
- "Oh! she's good, that little mare." said the farmer, who by this time was seated. "Your ser-

vant, gentlemen. Well, Pierrotin, how soon do you start?"

"I have two travellers in there after a cup of coffee," replied Pierrotin.

The hollow-cheeked young man and his page reappeared.

- "Come, let's start!" was the general cry.
- "We are going to start," replied Pierrotin. "Now, then, make ready," he said to the porter, who began thereupon to take away the stones which stopped the wheels.

Pierrotin took Rougeot by the bridle and gave that guttural cry, "Ket, ket!" to tell the two animals to collect their energy; on which, though evidently stiff, they pulled the coach to the door of the Lion d'Argent. After which manœuvre, which was purely preparatory, Pierrotin gazed up the rue d'Enghien and then disappeared, leaving the coach in charge of the porter.

- "Ah ça! is he subject to such attacks, that master of yours?" said Mistigris, addressing the porter.
- "He has gone to get his feed from the stable," replied the porter, well versed in all the usual tricks to keep passengers quiet.
- "Well, after all," said Mistigris, " art is long, but life is shorts' to Bichette."

At this particular epoch, a fancy for mutilating or

transposing proverbs reigned in the studios. It was thought a triumph to find changes of letters, and sometimes of words, which still kept the semblance of the proverb while giving it a fantastic or ridiculous meaning.¹

"Patience, Mistigris!" said his master; "'come wheel, come whoa."

Pierrotin here returned, bringing with him the Comte de Sérizy, who had come through the rue de l'Échiquier, and with whom he had doubtless had a short conversation.

- "Père Léger," said Pierrotin, looking into the coach, "will you give your place to Monsieur le comte? That will balance the carriage better."
- "We sha'n't be off for an hour if you go on this way," cried Georges. "We shall have to take down this infernal bar, which cost such trouble to put up. Why should everybody be made to move for the man who comes last? We all have a right to the places we took. What place has monsieur engaged? Come, find that out! Have n't you a way-book, a register, or something? What place has Monsieur Lecomte engaged?—count of what, I'd like to know."
- "Monsieur le comte," said Pierrotin, visibly troubled, "I am afraid you will be uncomfortable."
- ¹ It is plainly impossible to translate many of these proverbs and put any fun or meaning into them. Tr.

- "Why did n't you keep better count of us?" said Mistigris. "'Short counts make good ends."
 - "Mistigris, behave yourself," said his master.

Monsieur de Sérizy was evidently taken by all the persons in the coach for a *bourgeois* of the name of Lecomte.

- "I Don't disturb any one," he said to Pierrotin. "I will sit with you in front."
- "Come, Mistigris," said the master to his rapin, "remember the respect you owe to age; you don't know how shockingly old you may be yourself some day. "Travel deforms youth." Give your place to monsieur."

Mistigris opened the leathern curtain and jumped out with the agility of a frog leaping into the water.

- "You must n't be a rabbit, august old man," he said to the count.
 - "Mistigris, 'ars est celare bonum,' said his master.
- "I thank you very much, monsieur," said the count to Mistigris's master, next to whom he now sat.

The minister of State cast a sagacious glance round the interior of the coach, which greatly affronted both Oscar and Georges.

"When persons want to be master of a coach, they should engage all the places," remarked Georges.

Certain now of his incognito, the Comte de Sérizy made no reply to this observation, but assumed the air of a good-natured *bourgeois*.

"Suppose you were late, would n't you be glad that the coach waited for you?" said the farmer to the two young men.

Pierrotin still looked up and down the street, whip in hand, apparently reluctant to mount to the hard seat where Mistigris was fidgeting.

- "If you expect some one else, I am not the last," said the count.
 - "I agree to that reasoning," said Mistigris.

Georges and Oscar began to laugh impertinently.

- "The old fellow doesn't know much," whispered Georges to Oscar, who was delighted at this apparent union between himself and the object of his envy.
- "Parbleu!" cried Pierrotin, "I should n't be sorry for two more passengers."
- "I have n't paid; I'll get out," said Georges, alarmed.
- "What are you waiting for, Pierrotin?" asked Père Léger.

Whereupon Pierrotin shouted a certain "Hi!" in which Bichette and Rougeot recognized a definitive resolution, and they both sprang toward the rise of the faubourg at a pace which was soon to slacken.

The count had a red face, of a burning red all over, on which were certain inflamed portions which his snow-white hair brought out into full relief. To any but heedless youths, this complexion would have revealed a constant inflammation of the blood, produced by incessant labor. These blotches and pimples so injured the naturally noble air of the count that careful examination was needed to find in his green-gray eyes the shrewdness of the magistrate, the wisdom of a statesman, and the knowledge of a legislator. His face was flat, and the nose seemed to have been depressed into it. The hat hid the grace and beauty of his forehead. In short, there was enough to amuse those thoughtless youths in the odd contrasts of the silvery hair, the burning face, and the thick, tufted eyebrows which were still jet-black.

The count wore a long blue overcoat, buttoned in military fashion to the throat, a white cravat around his neck, cotton wool in his ears, and a shirt-collar high enough to make a large square patch of white on each cheek. His black trousers covered his boots, the toes of which were barely seen. He wore no decoration in his button-hole, and doeskin gloves concealed his hands. Nothing about him betrayed to the eyes of youth a peer of France, and one of the most useful statesmen in the kingdom.

Père Léger had never seen the count, who, on his side, knew the former only by name. When the count, as he got into the carriage, cast the glance about him which affronted Georges and Oscar, he was, in reality, looking for the head-clerk of his notary (in case he had

been forced, like himself, to take Pierrotin's vehicle), intending to caution him instantly about his own incognito. But feeling reassured by the appearance of Oscar, and that of Père Léger, and, above all, by the quasi-military air, the waxed moustache, and the general look of an adventurer that distinguished Georges, he concluded that his note had reached his notary, Alexandre Crottat, in time to prevent the departure of the clerk.

"Père Léger," said Pierrotin, when they reached the steep hill of the faubourg Saint-Denis by the rue de la Fidélité, "suppose we get out, hey?"

"I'll get out, too," said the count, hearing Léger's name.

"Goodness! if this is how we are going, we shall do fourteen miles in fifteen days!" cried Georges.

"It is n't my fault," said Pierrotin, "if a passenger wishes to get out."

"Ten louis for you if you keep the secret of my being here as I told you before," said the count in a low voice, taking Pierrotin by the arm.

"Oh, my thousand francs!" thought Pierrotin as he winked an eye at Monsieur de Sérizy, which meant, "Rely on me."

Oscar and Georges stayed in the coach.

"Look here, Pierrotin, since Pierrotin you are," cried Georges, when the passengers were once more

stowed away in the vehicle, "if you don't mean to go faster than this, say so! I'll pay my fare and take a post-horse at Saint-Denis, for I have important business on hand which can't be delayed."

"Oh! he'll go well enough," said Père Léger. "Besides, the distance is n't great."

"I am never more than half an hour late," asserted Pierrotin.

"Well, you are not wheeling the Pope in this old barrow of yours," said Georges, "so, get on."

"Perhaps he's afraid of shaking monsieur," said Mistigris looking round at the count. "But you should n't have preferences, Pierrotin, it is n't right."

"Coucous and the Charter make all Frenchmen equals," said Georges.

"Oh! be easy," said Père Léger; "we are sure to get to La Chapelle by mid-day," — La Chapelle being the village next beyond the Barrière of Saint-Denis.

IV.

THE GRANDSON OF THE FAMOUS CZERNI-GEORGES.

Those who travel in public conveyances know that the persons thus united by chance do not immediately have anything to say to one another; unless under special circumstances, conversation rarely begins until they have gone some distance. This period of silence is employed as much in mutual examination as in settling into their places. Minds need to get their equilibrium as much as bodies. When each person thinks he has discovered the age, profession, and character of his companions, the most talkative member of the company begins, and the conversation gets under way with all the more vivacity because those present feel a need of enlivening the journey and forgetting its tedium.

That is how things happen in French stage-coaches. In other countries customs are very different. Englishmen pique themselves on never opening their lips; Germans are melancholy in a vehicle; Italians too wary to talk; Spaniards have no public conveyances; and Russians no roads. There is no amusement except in the lumbering diligences of France, that

gabbling and indiscreet country, where every one is in a hurry to laugh and show his wit, and where jest and epigram enliven all things, even the poverty of the lower classes and the weightier cares of the solid bourgeois. In a coach there is no police to check tongues, and legislative assemblies have set the fashion of public discussion. When a young man of twenty-two, like the one named Georges, is clever and lively, he is much tempted, especially under circumstances like the present, to abuse those qualities.

In the first place, Georges had soon decided that he was the superior human being of the party there assembled. He saw in the count a manufacturer of the second-class, whom he took, for some unknown reason, to be a chandler; in the shabby young man accompanied by Mistigris, a fellow of no account; in Oscar a ninny, and in Père Léger, the fat farmer, an excellent subject to hoax. Having thus looked over the ground, he resolved to amuse himself at the expense of such companions.

"Let me see," he thought to himself, as the coucou went down the hill from La Chapelle to the plain of Saint-Denis, "shall I pass myself off for Étienne or Béranger? No, these idiots don't know who they are. Carbonaro? the deuce! I might get myself arrested. Suppose I say I'm a son of Marshal Ney? Pooh! what could I tell them? — about the execution of my

father? It would n't be funny. Better be a disguised Russian prince and make them swallow a lot of stuff about the Emperor Alexander. Or I might be Cousin, and talk philosophy; oh, could n't I perplex 'em! But no, that shabby fellow with the tousled head looks to me as if he had jogged his way through the Sorbonne. What a pity! I can mimic an Englishman so perfectly I might have pretended to be Lord Byron, travelling incognito. Sapristi! I'll command the troops of Ali, pacha of Janina!"

During this mental monologue, the coucou rolled through clouds of dust rising on either side of it from the much travelled road.

"What dust!" cried Mistigris.

"Henry IV. is dead!" retorted his master. "If you'd say it was scented with vanilla that would be emitting a new opinion."

"You think you're witty," replied Mistigris. "Well, it is like vanilla at times."

"In the Levant — " said Georges, with the air of beginning a story.

"Ex Oriente flux," remarked Mistigris's master, interrupting the speaker.

"I said in the Levant, from which I have just returned," continued Georges, "the dust smells very good; but here it smells of nothing, except in some old dust-barrel like this."

"Has monsieur lately returned from the Levant?" said Mistigris, maliciously. "He is n't much tanned by the sun."

"Oh! I've just left my bed after an illness of three months, from the germ, so the doctors said, of suppressed plague."

"Have you had the plague?" cried the count, with a gesture of alarm. "Pierrotin, stop!"

"Go on, Pierrotin," said Mistigris. "Didn't you hear him say it was inward, his plague?" added the rapin, talking back to Monsieur de Sérizy. "It is n't catching; it only comes out in conversation."

"Mistigris! if you interfere again I'll have you put off into the road," said his master. "And so," he added, turning to Georges, "monsieur has been to the East?"

"Yes, monsieur; first to Egypt, then to Greece, where I served under Ali, pacha of Janina, with whom I had a terrible quarrel. There's no enduring those climates long; besides, the emotions of all kinds in Oriental life have disorganized my liver."

"What, have you served as a soldier?" asked the fat farmer. "How old are you?"

"Twenty-nine," replied Georges, whereupon all the passengers looked at him. "At eighteen I enlisted as a private for the famous campaign of 1813; but I was present at only one battle, that of Hanau, where I was

promoted sergeant-major. In France, at Montoreau, I won the rank of sub-lieutenant, and was decorated by, — there are no informers here, I'm sure, — by the Emperor."

"What! are you decorated?" cried Oscar. "Why don't you wear your cross?"

"The cross of *ceux-ci?* No, thank you! Besides, what man of any breeding would wear his decorations in travelling? There's monsieur," he said, motioning to the Comte de Sérizy. "I'll bet whatever you like—"

"Betting whatever you like means, in France, betting nothing at all," said Mistigris's master.

"I'll bet whatever you like," repeated Georges, incisively, "that monsieur here is covered with stars."

"Well," said the count, laughing, "I have the grand cross of the Legion of honor, that of Saint Andrew of Russia, that of the Prussian Eagle, that of the Annunciation of Sardinia, and the Golden Fleece."

"Beg pardon," said Mistigris, "are they all in the coucou?"

"Hey! that brick-colored old fellow goes it strong!" whispered Georges to Oscar. "What was I saying?
— oh! I know. I don't deny that I adore the Emperor—"

"I served under him," said the count.

"What a man he was, was n't he?" cried Georges.

- "A man to whom I owe many obligations," replied the count, with a silly expression that was admirably assumed.
 - "For all those crosses?" inquired Mistigris.
- "And what quantities of snuff he took!" continued Monsieur de Sérizy.
 - "He carried it loose in his pockets," said Georges.
- "So I've been told," remarked Père Léger with an incredulous look.
- "Worse than that; he chewed and smoked," continued Georges. "I saw him smoking, in a queer way, too, at Waterloo, when Marshal Soult took him round the waist and flung him into his carriage, just as he had seized a musket and was going to charge the English—"
- "You were at Waterloo!" cried Oscar, his eyes stretching wide open.
- "Yes, young man, I did the campaign of 1815. I was a captain at Mont-Saint-Jean, and I retired to the Loire, after we were all disbanded. Faith! I was disgusted with France; I could n't stand it. In fact, I should certainly have got myself arrested; so off I went, with two or three dashing fellows, Selves, Besson, and others, who are now in Egypt, and we entered the service of pacha Mohammed; a queer sort of fellow he was, too! Once a tobacco merchant in the bazaars, he is now on the high-road to be a

sovereign prince. You've all seen him in that picture by Horace Vernet, — 'The Massacre of the Mameluks.' What a handsome fellow he was! But I would n't give up the religion of my fathers and embrace Islamism; all the more because the abjuration required a surgical operation which I had n't any fancy for. Besides, nobody respects a renegade. Now if they had offered me a hundred thousand francs a year, perhaps — and yet, no! The pacha did give me a thousand talari as a present."

"How much is that?" asked Oscar, who was listening to Georges with all his ears.

"Oh! not much. A talaro is, as you might say, a five-franc piece. But faith! I got no compensation for the vices I contracted in that God-forsaken country, if country it is. I can't live now without smoking a narghile twice a-day, and that's very costly."

"How did you find Egypt?" asked the count.

"Egypt? Oh! Egypt is all sand," replied Georges, by no means taken aback. "There's nothing green but the valley of the Nile. Draw a green line down a sheet of yellow paper, and you have Egypt. But those Egyptians — fellahs they are called — have an immense advantage over us. There are no gendarmes in that country. You may go from end to end of Egypt and you won't see one."

"But I suppose there are a good many Egyptians," said Mistigris.

"Not as many as you think for," replied Georges. "There are many more Abyssinians, and Giaours, and Vechabites, Bedouins, and Cophs. But all that kind of animal is very uninteresting, and I was glad enough to embark on a Genoese polacea which was loading for the Ionian Islands with gunpowder and munitions for Ali de Tébélen. You know, don't vou, that the British sell powder and munitions of war to all the world, - Turks, Greeks, and the devil, too, if the devil has money? From Zante we were to skirt the coasts of Greece and tack about, on and off. Now it happens that my name of Georges is famous in that country. I am, such as you see me, the grandson of the famous Czerni-Georges who made war upon the Porte, and, instead of crushing it, as he meant to do, got crushed himself. His son took refuge in the house of the French consul at Smyrna, and he afterwards died in Paris, leaving my mother pregnant with me, his seventh child. Our property was all stolen by friends of my grandfather; in fact, we were ruined. My mother, who lived on her diamonds, which she sold one by one, married, in 1799, my step-father, Monsieur Yung, a purveyor. But my mother is dead, and I have quarrelled with my step-father, who, between ourselves, is a blackguard; he is still alive, but I never see him. That's why, in despair, left all to myself, I went off to the wars as a private in 1813.

Well, to go back to the time I returned to Greece; you would n't believe with what joy old Ali Tébélen received the grandson of Czerni-Georges. Here, of course, I call myself simply Georges. The pacha gave me a harem—"

"You have had a harem?" said Oscar.

"Were you a pacha with many tails?" asked Mistigris.

"How is it that you don't know," replied Georges, "that only the Sultan makes pachas, and that my friend Tébélen (for we were as friendly as Bourbons) was in rebellion against the Padishah! You know, or you don't know, that the true title of the Grand Seignior is Padishah, and not Sultan or Grand Turk. You need n't think that a harem is much of a thing; you might as well have a herd of goats. The women are horribly stupid down there; I much prefer the grisettes of the Chaumières at Mont-Parnasse."

"They are nearer, at any rate," said the count.

"The women of the harem could n't speak a word of French, and that language is indispensable for talking. Ali gave me five legitimate wives and ten slaves; that's equivalent to having none at all at Janina. In the East, you must know, it is thought very bad style to have wives and women. They have them, just as we have Voltaire and Rousseau; but who ever opens his Voltaire or his Rousseau? Nobody. But,

for all that, the highest style is to be jealous. They sew a woman up in a sack and fling her into the water on the slightest suspicion, — that's according to their Code."

"Did you fling any in?" asked the farmer.

"I, a Frenchman! for shame! I loved them."

Whereupon Georges twirled and twisted his moustache with a dreamy air.

They were now entering Saint-Denis, and Pierrotin presently drew up before the door of a tavern where were sold the famous cheese-cakes of that place. All the travellers got out. Puzzled by the apparent truth mingled with Georges' inventions, the count returned to the coucou when the others had entered the house, and looked beneath the cushion for the portfolio which Pierrotin told him that enigmatical youth had placed there. On it he read the words in gilt letters: "Maître Crottat, notary." The count at once opened it, and fearing, with some reason, that Père Léger might be seized with the same curiosity, he took out the deed of sale for the farm at Moulineaux, put it into his coat pocket, and entered the inn to keep an eye on the travellers.

"This Georges is neither more nor less than Crottat's second clerk," thought he. "I shall pay my compliments to his master, whose business it was to send me his head-clerk."

From the respectful glances of Père Léger and Oscar, Georges perceived that he had made for himself two fervent admirers. Accordingly, he now posed as a great personage; paid for their cheese-cakes, and ordered for each a glass of Alicante. He offered the same to Mistigris and his master, who refused with smiles; but the friend of Ali Tébélen profited by the occasion to ask the pair their names.

"Oh! monsieur," said Mistigris' master, "I am not blessed, like you, with an illustrious name; and I have not returned from Asia —"

At this moment the count, hastening into the huge inn-kitchen lest his absence should excite inquiry, entered the place in time to hear the conclusion of the young man's speech.

"—I am only a poor painter lately returned from Rome, where I went at the cost of the government, after winning the "grand prix" five years ago. My name is Schinner."

"Hey! bourgeois, may I offer you a glass of Alicante and some cheese-cakes?" said Georges to the count.

"Thank you," replied the latter. "I never leave home without taking my cup of coffee and cream."

"Don't you eat anything between meals? How bourgeois, Marais, Place Royale, that is!" cried Georges. "When he blagued just now about his

crosses, I thought there was something in him," whispered the Eastern hero to the painter. "However, we'll set him going on his decorations, the old tallow-chandler! Come, my lad," he added, calling to Oscar, "drink me down the glass poured out for the chandler; that will start your moustache."

Oscar, anxious to play the man, swallowed the second glass of wine, and ate three more cheese-cakes.

"Good wine, that!" said Père Léger, smacking his lips.

"It is all the better," said Georges, "because it comes from Bercy. I've been to Alicante myself, and I know that this wine no more resembles what is made there than my arm is like a windmill. Our made-up wines are a great deal better than the natural ones in their own country. Come, Pierrotin, take a glass! It is a great pity your horses can't take one, too; we might go faster."

"Forward, march!" cried Pierrotin, amid a mighty clacking of whips, after the travellers were again boxed up.

It was now eleven o'clock. The weather, which had been cloudy, cleared; the breeze swept off the mists, and the blue of the sky appeared in spots; so that when the *roucou* trundled along the narrow strip of road from Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte, the sun had fairly drunk up the last floating vapors of the

diaphanous veil which swathed the scenery of that famous region.

"Well, now, tell us why you left your friend the pacha," said Père Léger, addressing Georges.

"He was a very singular scamp," replied Georges, with an air that hid a multitude of mysteries. "He put me in command of his cavalry, — so far, so good—"

"Ah! that's why he wears spurs," thought poor Oscar.

"At that time Ali Tébélen wanted to rid himself of Chosrew pacha, another queer chap! You call him, here, Chaureff; but the name is pronounced, in Turkish, Cosserew. You must have read in the newspapers how old Ali drubbed Chosrew, and soundly, too, faith! Well, if it had n't been for me, Ali Tébélen himself would have bit the dust two days earlier. I was at the right wing, and I saw Chosrew, an old slyboots, thinking to force our centre, — ranks closed, stiff, swift, fine movement à la Murat. Good! I take my time; then I charge, double-quick, and cut his line in two, — you understand? Ha! ha! after the affair was over, Ali kissed me — "

"Do they do that in the East?" asked the count, in a joking way.

"Yes, monsieur," said the painter, "that's done all the world over."

"After that," continued Georges, "Ali gave me yataghans, and carbines, and scimetars, and what-not. But when we got back to his capital he made me propositions, wanted me to drown a wife, and make a slave of myself, - Orientals are so queer! But I thought I'd had enough of it; for, after all, you know, Ali Tébélen was a rebel against the Porte. So I concluded I had better get off while I could. But I'll do Monsieur Tébélen the justice to say that he loaded me with presents, - diamonds, ten thousand talari, one thousand gold coins, a beautiful Greek girl for groom. a little Circassian for a mistress, and an Arab horse! Yes, Ali Tébélen, pacha of Janina, is too little known; he needs an historian. It is only in the East one meets with such iron souls, who can nurse a vengeance twenty years and accomplish it some fine morning. He had the most magnificent white beard that was ever seen, and a hard, stern face -- "

"But what did you do with your treasures?" asked farmer Léger.

"Ha! that's it! you may well ask that! Those fellows down there have n't any Grand Livre nor any Bank of France. So I was forced to carry off my windfalls in a felucca, which was captured by the Turkish High-Admiral himself. Such as you see me here to-day, I came very near being impaled at Smyrna. Indeed, if it had n't been for Monsieur de

Rivière, our ambassador, who was there, they'd have taken me for an accomplice of Ali pacha. I saved my head, but, to tell the honest truth, all the rest, the ten thousand talari, the thousand gold pieces, and the fine weapons, were all, yes all, drunk up by the thirsty treasury of the Turkish admiral. My position was the more perilous because that very admiral chanced to be Chosrew pacha. After I routed him, the fellow had managed to obtain a position which is equal to that of our Admiral of the Fleet—"

"But I thought he was in the cavalry?" said Père Léger, who had followed the narrative with the deepest attention.

"Dear me! how little the East is understood in the French provinces!" cried Georges. "Monsieur, I'll explain the Turks to you. You are a farmer; the Padishah (that's the Sultan) makes you a marshal; if you don't fulfil your functions to his satisfaction, so much the worse for you, he cuts your head off; that's his way of dismissing his functionaries. A gardener is made a prefect; and the prime minister comes down to be a foot-boy. The Ottomans have no system of promotion and no hierarchy. From a cavalry officer Chosrew simply became a naval officer. Sultan Mahmoud ordered him to capture Ali by sea; and he did get hold of him, assisted by those beggarly English — who put their paw on most of the treasure.

This Chosrew, who had not forgotten the riding-lesson I gave him, recognized me. You understand, my goose was cooked, oh, brown! when it suddenly came into my head to claim protection as a Frenchman and a troubadour from Monsieur de Rivière. The ambassador, enchanted to find something to show him off, demanded that I should be set at liberty. The Turks have one good trait in their nature; they are as willing to let you go as they are to cut your head off; they are indifferent to everything. The French consul, charming fellow, friend of Chosrew, made him give back two thousand of the talari, and, consequently, his name is, as I may say, graven on my heart—"

"What was his name?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy; and a look of some surprise passed over his face as Georges named, correctly, one of our most distinguished consul-generals who happened at that time to be stationed at Smyrna.

"I assisted," added Georges, "at the execution of the Governor of Smyrna, whom the Sultan had ordered Chosrew to put to death. It was one of the most curious things I ever saw, though I 've seen many, — I 'll tell you about it when we stop for breakfast. From Smyrna I crossed to Spain, hearing there was a revolution there. I went straight to Mina, who appointed me as his aide-de-camp with the rank of colonel. I fought for the constitutional cause, which will cer-

tainly be defeated when we enter Spain — as we undoubtedly shall, some of these days —"

"You, a French soldier!" said the count, sternly. "You show extraordinary confidence in the discretion of those who are listening to you."

"But there are no spies here," said Georges.

"Are you aware, Colonel Georges," continued the count, "that the Court of Peers is at this very time inquiring into a conspiracy which has made the government extremely severe in its treatment of French soldiers who bear arms against France, and who deal in foreign intrigues for the purpose of overthrowing our legitimate sovereigns."

On hearing this stern admonition the painter turned red to his ears and looked at Mistigris, who seemed dumfounded.

"Well?" said Père Léger, "what next?"

"If," continued the count, "I were a magistrate, it would be my duty to order the gendarmes at Pierrefitte to arrest the aide-de-camp of Mina, and to summon all present in this vehicle to testify to his words."

This speech stopped Georges' narrative all the more surely, because at this moment the *coucou* reached the guard-house of a brigade of gendarmerie, — the white flag floating, as the orthodox saying is, upon the breeze.

"You have too many decorations to do such a dastardly thing," said Oscar.

"Never mind; we'll catch up with him soon," whispered Georges in the lad's ear.

"Colonel," cried Léger, who was a good deal disturbed by the count's outburst, and wanted to change the conversation, "in all these countries where you have been, what sort of farming do they do? How do they vary the crops?"

"Well, in the first place, my good fellow, you must understand, they are too busy cropping off each others' heads to think much of cropping the ground."

The count could n't help smiling; and that smile reassured the narrator.

"They have a way of cultivating which you will think very queer. They don't cultivate at all; that's their style of farming. The Turks and the Greeks, they eat onions or rice. They get opium from poppies, and it gives them a fine revenue. Then they have tobacco, which grows of itself, famous latakiah! and dates! and all kinds of sweet things that don't need cultivation. It is a country full of resources and commerce. They make fine rugs at Smyrna, and not dear."

"But," persisted Léger, "if the rugs are made of wool they must come from sheep; and to have sheep you must have fields, farms, culture—"

"Well, there may be something of that sort," replied Grorges. "But their chief crop, rice, grows in the water. As for me, I have only been along the coasts and seen the parts that are devastated by war. Besides, I have the deepest aversion to statistics."

"How about the taxes?" asked the farmer.

"Oh! the taxes are heavy; they take all a man has, and leave him the rest. The pacha of Egypt was so struck with the advantages of that system, that, when I came away he was on the point of organizing his own administration on that footing—"

"But," said Léger, who no longer understood a single word, "how?"

"How?" said Georges. "Why, agents go round and take all the harvests, and leave the fellahs just enough to live on. That's a system that does away with stamped papers and bureaucracy, the curse of France, hein?"

"By virtue of what right?" said Léger.

"Right? why it is a land of despotism. They have n't any rights. Don't you know the fine definition Montesquieu gives of despotism. 'Like the savage, it cuts down the tree to gather the fruits.' They don't tax, they take everything."

"And that's what our rulers are trying to bring us to. 'Tax vobiscum,' — no, thank you!" said Mistigris.

"But that is what we are coming to," said the count, "Therefore, those who own land will do well

to sell it. Monsieur Schinner must have seen how things are tending in Italy, where the taxes are enormous."

"Corpo di Bacco! the Pope is laying it on heavily," replied Schinner. "But the people are used to it. Besides, Italians are so good-natured that if you let 'em murder a few travellers along the highways they're contented."

"I see, Monsieur Schinner," said the count, "that you are not wearing the decoration you obtained in 1819; it seems the fashion nowadays not to wear orders."

Mistigris and the pretended Schinner blushed to their ears.

"Well, with me," said the artist, "the case is different. It is n't on account of fashion; but I don't want to be recognized. Have the goodness not to betray me, monsieur; I am supposed to be a little painter of no consequence, — a mere decorator. I'm on my way to a château where I must n't rouse the slightest suspicion."

"Ah! I see," said the count. "some intrigue, — a love affair! Youth is happy!"

Oscar, who was writhing in his skin at being a nobody and having nothing to say, gazed at Colonel Czerni-Georges and at the famous painter Schinner, and wondered how he could transform himself into somebody. But a youth of nineteen, kept at home all his life, and going for two weeks only into the country, what could he be, or do, or say? However, the Alicante had got into his head, and his vanity was boiling in his veins; so when the famous Schinner allowed a romantic adventure to be guessed at in which the danger seemed as great as the pleasure, he fastened his eyes, sparkling with wrath and envy, upon that hero.

"Yes," said the count, with a credulous air, "a man must love a woman well to make such sacrifices."

"What sacrifices?" demanded Mistigris.

"Don't you know, my little friend, that a ceiling painted by so great a master as yours is worth its weight in gold?" replied the count. "If the civil list paid you, as it did, thirty thousand francs for each of those rooms in the Louvre," he continued, addressing Schinner, "a bourgeois—as you call us in your studios—ought certainly to pay you twenty thousand. Whereas, if you go to this château as a humble decorator, you will not get two thousand."

"The money is not the greatest loss," said Mistigris. "The work is sure to be a masterpiece, but he can't sign it, you know, for fear of compromising her."

"Ah! I'd return all my crosses to the sovereigns who gave them to me for the devotion that youth can win," said the count.

"That's just it!" said Mistigris, "when one's

young, one 's loved; plenty of love, plenty of women; but they do say: 'Where there's wife, there's mope.'"

"What does Madame Schinner say to all this?" pursued the count; "for I believe you married, out of love, the beautiful Adélaïde de Rouville, the protégée of old Admiral de Kergarouët; who, by the bye, obtained for you the order for the Louvre ceilings through his nephew, the Comte de Fontaine."

"A great painter is never married when he travels," said Mistigris.

"So that's the morality of studios, is it?" cried the count, with an air of great simplicity.

"Is the morality of courts where you got those decorations of yours any better?" said Schinner, recovering his self-possession, upset for the moment by finding how much the count knew of Schinner's life as an artist.

"I never asked for any of my orders," said the count. "I believe I have loyally earned them."

"A fair yield and no flavour," said Mistigris.

The count was resolved not to betray himself; he assumed an air of good-humored interest in the country, and looked up the valley of Groslay as the *coucou* took the road to Saint-Brice, leaving that to Chantilly on the right.

"Is Rome as fine as they say it is?" said Georges, addressing the great painter.

"Rome is fine only to those who love it; a man must have a passion for it to enjoy it. As a city, I prefer Venice, — though I just missed being murdered there."

"Faith, yes!" cried Mistigris; "if it had n't been for me you'd have been gobbled up. It was that mischief-making tom-fool, Lord Byron, who got you into the scrape. Oh! was n't he raging, that buffoon of an Englishman?"

"Hush!" said Schinner. "I don't want my affair with Lord Byron talked about."

"But you must own, all the same, that you were glad enough I knew how to box," said Mistigris.

From time to time, Pierrotin exchanged sly glances with the count, which might have made less inexperienced persons than the five other travellers uneasy.

"Lords, pachas, and thirty-thousand-franc ceilings!" he cried. "I seem to be driving sovereigns. What pourboires I'll get!"

"And all the places paid for!" said Mistigris, slyly.

"It is a lucky day for me," continued Pierrotin; for you know, Père Léger, about my beautiful new coach on which I have paid an advance of two thousand francs? Well, those dogs of carriage-builders, to whom I have to pay two thousand five hundred francs more, won't take fifteen hundred down, and my note for a thousand for two months! Those vultures

want it all. Who ever heard of being so stiff with a man in business these eight years, and the father of a family? — making me run the risk of losing everything, carriage and money too, if I can't find before to-morrow night that miserable last thousand! Hue, Bichette! They would n't play that trick on the great coach offices, I'll warrant you."

"Yes, that's it," said the rapin; "' your money or your strife."

"Well, you have only eight hundred now to get," remarked the count, who considered this moan, addressed to Père Léger, a sort of letter of credit drawn upon himself.

"True," said Pierrotin. "Xi! xi! Rougeot!"

"You must have seen many fine ceilings in Venice," resumed the count, addressing Schinner.

"I was too much in love to take any notice of what seemed to me then mere trifles," replied Schinner. "But I was soon cured of that folly, for it was in the Venetian states — in Dalmatia — that I received a cruel lesson."

"Can it be told?" asked Georges. "I know Dalmatia very well."

"Well, if you have been there, you know that all the people at that end of the Adriatic are pirates, rovers, corsairs retired from business, as they have n't been hanged—"

"Uscoques," said Georges.

Hearing the right name given, the count, who had been sent by Napoleon on one occasion to the Illyrian provinces, turned his head and looked at Georges, so surprised was he.

"The affair happened in that town where they make maraschino," continued Schinner, seeming to search for a name.

"Zara," said Georges. "I've been there; it is on the coast."

"You are right," said the painter. "I had gone there to look at the country, for I adore scenery. I've longed a score of times to paint landscape, which no one, as I think, understands but Mistigris, who will some day reproduce Hobbema, Ruysdael, Claude Lorrain, Poussin, and others."

"But," exclaimed the count, "if he reproduces one of them won't that be enough?"

"If you persist in interrupting, monsieur," said Oscar, "we shall never get on."

"And Monsieur Schinner was not addressing himself to you in particular," added Georges.

"'T is n't polite to interrupt," said Mistigris, sententiously, "but we all do it, and conversation would lose a great deal if we didn't scatter little condiments while exchanging our reflections. Therefore, continue, agreeable old gentleman, to lecture us, if you like. It

is done in the best society, and you know the proverb: 'we must 'owl with the wolves.'"

"I had heard marvellous things of Dalmatia," resumed Schinner, "so I went there, leaving Mistigris in Venice at an inn—"

"Locanda," interposed Mistigris; "keep to the local color."

"Zara is what is called a country town -- "

"Yes," said Georges; "but it is fortified."

"Parbleu!" said Schinner; "the fortifications count for much in my adventure. At Zara there are a great many apothecaries. I lodged with one. In foreign countries everybody makes a principal business of letting lodgings; all other trades are accessory. In the evening, linen changed, I sat in my balcony. In the opposite balcony I saw a woman; oh! such a woman! Greek, —that tells all! The most beautiful creature in the town; almond eyes, lids that dropped like curtains, lashes like a paint-brush, a face with an oval to drive Raffaelle mad, a skin of the most delicious coloring, tints well-blended, velvety! and hands, oh! —"

"They weren't made of butter like those of the David school," put in Mistigris.

"You are always lugging in your painting," cried Georges.

"La, la!" retorted Mistigris; "'an ounce o' paint is worth a pound of swagger."

"And such a costume! pure Greek!" continued Schinner. "Conflagration of soul! you understand? Well, I questioned my Diafoirus; and he told me that my neighbor was named Zena. Changed my linen. The husband, an old villain, in order to marry Zena, paid three hundred thousand francs to her father and mother, so celebrated was the beauty of that beautiful creature, who was truly the most beautiful girl in all Dalmatia, Illyria, Adriatica, and other places. In those parts they buy their wives without seeing them—"

"I shall not go there," said Père Léger.

"There are nights when my sleep is still illuminated by the eyes of Zena," continued Schinner. "The husband was sixty-nine years of age, and jealous! not as a tiger, for they say of a tiger, 'jealous as a Dalmatian;' and my man was worse than a Dalmatian, one Dalmatian, — he was three and a half Dalmatians at the very least; he was an Uscoque, tricoque, archicoque in a bicoque of a paltry little place like Zara—"

"Horrid fellow, and 'horrider bellow,'" put in Mistigris.

"Ha! good," said Georges, laughing.

"After being a corsair, and probably a pirate, he thought no more of spitting a Christian on his dagger than I did of spitting on the ground," continued Schinner. "So that was how the land lay. The old

wretch had millions, and was hideous with the loss of an ear some pacha had cut off, and the want of an eye left I don't know where. 'Never,' said the little Diafoirus, 'never does he leave his wife, never for a second.' 'Perhaps she'll want your services, and I could go in your clothes; that 's a trick that has great success in our theatres,' I said to him. it would take too long to tell you all the delicious moments of that lifetime - to wit, three days - which I passed exchanging looks with Zena, and changing linen every day. It was all the more violently titillating because the slightest motion was significant and At last it must have dawned upon Zena's dangerous. mind that none but a Frenchman and an artist was daring enough to make eyes at her in the midst of the perils by which she was surrounded; and as she hated her hideous pirate, she answered my glances with delightful ogles fit to raise a man to the summit of Paradise without pulleys. I attained to the height of Don Quixote; I rose to exaltation! and I cried: 'The monster may kill me, but I'll go, I'll go!' I gave up landscape and studied the ignoble dwelling of the Uscoque. That night, changed linen, and put on the most perfumed shirt I had; then I crossed the street, and entered -- "

[&]quot;The house?" cried Oscar.

[&]quot;The house?" echoed Georges.

"The house," said Schinner.

"Well, you're a bold dog," cried farmer Léger. "I should have kept out of it myself."

"Especially as you could never have got through that doorway," replied Schinner. "So in I went," he resumed, "and I found two hands stretched out to meet I said nothing, for those hands, soft as the peel of an onion, enjoined me to silence. A whisper breathed into my ear, 'He sleeps!' Then, as we were sure that nobody would see us, we went to walk, Zena and I, upon the ramparts, but accompanied, if you please, by a duenna, as hideous as an old portress, who did n't leave us any more than our shadow; and I could n't persuade Madame Pirate to send her away. The next night we did the same thing, and again I wanted to get rid of the old woman, but Zena resisted. As my sweet love spoke only Greek, and I Venetian, we could n't understand each other, and so we quar-I said to myself, in changing linen, 'As sure as fate, the next time there'll be no old woman, and we can make it all up with the language of love.' Instead of which, fate willed that that old woman should save my life! You'll hear how. The weather was fine, and, not to create suspicion, I took a turn at landscape, - this was after our quarrel was made up, you understand. After walking along the ramparts for some time, I was coming tranquilly home with my

hands in my pockets, when I saw the street crowded with people. Such a crowd! like that for an execution. It fell upon me; I was seized, garroted, gagged, and guarded by the police. Ah! you don't know—and I hope you never may know—what it is to be taken for a murderer by a maddened populace which stones you and howls after you from end to end of the principal street of a town, shouting for your death! Ah! those eyes were so many flames, all mouths were a single curse, while from the volume of that burning hatred rose the fearful cry: 'To death! to death! down with the murderer!'"

"So those Dalmatians spoke our language, did they?" said the count. "I observe you relate the scene as if it happened yesterday."

Schinner was nonplussed.

"Riot has but one language," said the astute statesman Mistigris.

"Well," continued Schinner, "when I was brought into court in presence of the magistrates, I learned that the cursed corsair was dead, poisoned by Zena. I'd liked to have changed linen then. Give you my word, I knew nothing of that melodrama. It seems the Greek girl put opium (a great many poppies, as monsieur told us, grow about there) in the pirate's grog, just to make him sleep soundly and leave her free for a little walk with me, and the old duenna, unfortunate

creature, made a mistake and trebled the dose. The immense fortune of that cursed prirate was really the cause of all my Zena's troubles. But she explained matters so ingenuously that I, for one, was released with an injunction from the mayor and the Austrian commissary of police to go back to Rome. Zena, who let the heirs of the Uscoque and the judges get most of the old villain's wealth, was let off with two years' seclusion in a convent, where she still is. I am going back there some day to paint her portrait; for in a few years, you know, all this will be forgotten. Such are the follies one commits at eighteen!"

"And you left me without a sou in the locanda at Venice," said Mistigris. "And I had to get from Venice to Rome by painting portraits for five francs apiece, which they did n't pay me. However, that was my haleyon time. I don't regret it."

"You can imagine the reflections that came to me in that Dalmatian prison, thrown there without protection, having to answer to Austrians and Dalmatians, and in danger of losing my head because I went twice to walk with a woman. There's ill-luck, with a vengeance!"

"Did all that really happen to you?" said Oscar, naïvely.

"Why should n't it happen to him, inasmuch as it had already happened during the French occupation

of Illyria to one of our most gallant officers of artillery?" said the count, slyly.

"And you believed that artillery officer?" said Mistigris, as slyly to the count.

"Is that all?" asked Oscar.

"Of course he can't tell you that they cut his head off, — how could he?" said Mistigris. 'Dead schinners tell no tales.'"

"Monsieur, are there farms in that country?" asked Père Léger. "What do they cultivate?"

"Maraschino," replied Mistigris, — " a plant that grows to the height of the lips, and produces a liqueur which goes by that name."

"Ah!" said Père Léger.

"I only stayed three days in the town and fifteen in prison," said Schinner, "so I saw nothing; not even the fields where they grow the maraschino."

"They are fooling you," said Georges to the farmer. "Maraschino comes in cases."

"' Romances alter cases,' " remarked Mistigris.

\mathbf{V} .

THE DRAMA BEGINS.

PIERROTIN'S vehicle was now going down the steep incline of the valley of Saint-Brice to the inn which stands in the middle of the large village of that name, where Pierrotin was in the liabit of stopping an hour to breathe his horses, give them their oats, and water them. It was now about half-past one o'clock.

"Ha! here's Père Léger," cried the inn-keeper, when the coach pulled up before the door. "Do you breakfast?"

"Always once a day," said the fat farmer; "and I'll break a crust here and now."

"Give us a good breakfast," cried Georges, twirling his cane in a cavalier manner which excited the admiration of poor Oscar.

But that admiration was turned to jealousy when he saw the gay adventurer pull out from a side-pocket a small straw case, from which he selected a light-colored cigar, which he proceeded to smoke on the threshold of the inn door while waiting for breakfast.

"Do you smoke?" he asked of Oscar

"Sometimes," replied the ex-schoolboy, swelling out his little chest and assuming a jaunty air.

Georges presented the open case to Oscar and Schinner.

"Phew!" said the great painter; "ten-sous cigars!"

"The remains of those I brought back from Spain," said the adventurer. "Do you breakfast here?"

"No," said the artist. "I am expected at the château. Besides, I took something at the Lion d'Argent just before starting."

"And you?" said Georges to Oscar.

"I have breakfasted," replied Oscar.

Oscar would have given ten years of his life for boots and straps to his trousers. He sneezed, he coughed, he spat, and swallowed the smoke with ill-disguised grimaces.

"You don't know how to smoke," said Schinner; "look at me!"

With a motionless face Schinner breathed in the smoke of his cigar and let it out through his nose without the slightest contraction of feature. Then he took another whiff, kept the smoke in his throat, removed the cigar from his lips, and allowed the smoke slowly and gracefully to escape them.

"There, young man," said the great painter.

"Here, young man, here's another way; watch this," said Georges, imitating Schinner, but swallowing the smoke and exhaling none.

"And my parents believed they had educated me!" thought Oscar, endeavoring to smoke with better grace.

But his nausea was so strong that he was thankful when Mistigris filched his eigar, remarking, as he smoked it with evident satisfaction, "You have n't any contagious diseases, I hope."

Oscar in reply would fain have punched his head.

"How he does spend money!" he said, looking at Colonel Georges. "Eight francs for Alicante and the cheese-cakes; forty sous for cigars; and his breakfast will cost him —"

"Ten francs at least," replied Mistigris; "but that's how things are. "Sharp stomachs make short purses."

"Come, Père Léger, let us drink a bottle of Bordeaux together," said Georges to the farmer.

"Twenty francs for his breakfast!" cried Oscar; "in all, more than thirty-odd francs since we started!"

Killed by a sense of his inferiority, Oscar sat down on a stone post, lost in a revery which did not allow him to perceive that his trousers, drawn up by the effect of his position, showed the point of junction between the old top of his stocking and the new "footing,"—his mother's handiwork.

"We are brothers in socks," said Mistigris, pulling up his own trousers sufficiently to show an effect of the same kind, — "." By the footing, Hercules."

The count, who overheard this, laughed as he stood with folded arms under the porte-cochère, a little behind the other travellers. However nonsensical these lads might be, the grave statesman envied their very follies; he liked their bragging and enjoyed the fun of their lively chatter.

"Well, are you to have Les Moulineaux? for I know you went to Paris to get the money for the purchase," said the inn-keeper to Père Léger, whom he had just taken to the stables to see a horse he wanted to sell to him. "It will be queer if you manage to fleece a peer of France and a minister of State like the Comte de Sérizy."

The person thus alluded to showed no sign upon his face as he turned to look at the farmer.

"I've done for him," replied Père Léger, in a low voice.

"Good! I like to see those nobles fooled. If you should want twenty thousand francs or so, I'll lend them to you— But François, the conductor of Touchard's six o'clock coach, told me that Monsieur Margueron was invited by the Comte de Sérizy to dine with him to-day at Presles."

"That was the plan of his Excellency, but we had our own little ways of thwarting it," said the farmer, laughing.

"The count could appoint Monsieur Margueron's

son, and you have n't any place to give, — remember that," said the inn-keeper.

"Of course I do; but if the count has the ministry on his side, I have King Louis XVIII.," said Père Léger, in a low voice. "Forty thousand of his pictures on coin of the realm given to Moreau will enable me to buy Les Moulineaux for two hundred and sixty thousand, money down, before Mousieur de Sérizy can do so. When he finds the sale is made, he'll be glad enough to buy the farm for three hundred and sixty thousand, instead of letting me cut it up in small lots right in the heart of his property."

"Well done, bourgeois!" cried the inn-keeper.

"Don't you think that's good play?" said Léger.

"Besides," said the inn-keeper, "the farm is really worth that to him."

"Yes; Les Moulineaux brings in to-day six thousand francs in rental. I'll take another lease of it at seven thousand five hundred for eighteen years. Therefore it is really an investment at more than two and a half per cent. The count can't complain of that. In order not to involve Moreau, he is himself to propose me as tenant and farmer; it gives him a look of acting for his master's interests by finding him nearly three per cent for his money, and a tenant who will pay well."

"How much will Moreau make, in all?"

"Well, if the count gives him ten thousand francs

for the transaction the matter will bring him in fifty thousand, — and well-earned, too."

"After all, the count, so they tell me, does n't like Presles. And then he is so rich, what does it matter what it costs him?" said the inn-keeper. "I have never seen him, myself."

"Nor I," said Père Léger. "But he must be intending to live there, or why should he spend two hundred thousand francs in restoring the château? It is as fine now as the King's own palace."

"Well, well," said the inn-keeper, "it was high time for Moreau to feather his nest."

"Yes, for if the masters come there," replied Léger, "they won't keep their eyes in their pockets."

The count lost not a word of this conversation, which was held in a low voice, but not in a whisper.

"Here I have actually found the proofs I was going down there to seek," he thought, looking at the fat farmer as he entered the kitchen. "But perhaps," he added, "it is only a scheme; Moreau may not have listened to it."

So unwilling was he to believe that his steward could lend himself to such a conspiracy.

Pierrotin here came out to water his horses. The count, thinking that the driver would probably breakfast with the farmer and the inn-keeper, feared some thoughtless indiscretion.

"All these people combine against us," he thought; "it is allowable to baffle them — Pierrotin," he said in a low voice as the man passed him, "I promised you ten louis to keep my secret; but if you continue to conceal my name (and remember, I shall know if you pronounce it, or make the slightest sign that reveals it to any one, no matter who, here or at Isle-Adam, before to-night), I will give you to-morrow morning, on your return trip, the thousand francs you need to pay for your new coach. Therefore, by way of precaution," added the count, striking Pierrotin, who was pale with happiness, on the shoulder, "don't go in there to breakfast; stay with your horses."

"Monsieur le comte, I understand you; don't be afraid! it relates to Père Léger, of course?"

"It relates to every one," replied the count.

"Make yourself easy. — Come, hurry," said Pierrotin, a few moments later, putting his head into the kitchen. "We are late. Père Léger, you know there's a hill to climb; I'm not hungry, and I'll drive on slowly; you can soon overtake me, — it will do you good to walk a bit."

"What a hurry you are in, Pierrotin!" said the innkeeper. "Can't you stay and breakfast? The colonel here pays for the wine at fifty sous, and has ordered a bottle of champagne."

"I can't. I've got a fish I must deliver by three

o'clock for a great dinner at Stors; there's no fooling with customers, or fishes, either."

"You can harness that horse you want to sell me into the cabriolet; we'll breakfast in peace and overtake Pierrotin, and I can judge of the beast as we go along. We can go three in your jolter."

To the count's surprise, Pierrotin himself rebridled the horses. Schinner and Mistigris had walked on. Scarcely had Pierrotin overtaken the two artists and was mounting the hill from which Ecouen, the steeple of Mesnil, and the forests that surround that most beautiful region, came in sight, when the gallop of a horse and the jingling of a vehicle announced the coming of Père Léger and the grandson of Czerni-Georges, who were soon restored to their places in the coucou.

As Pierrotin drove down the narrow road to Moisselles, Georges, who had so far not ceased to talk with the farmer of the beauty of the hostess at Saint-Brice, suddenly exclaimed: "Upon my word, this landscape is not so bad, great painter, is it?"

"Pooh! you who have seen the East and Spain can't really admire it."

"I've two cigars left! If no one objects, will you help me finish them, Schinner? the little young man there seems to have found a whiff or two enough for him."

Père Léger and the count kept silence, which passed for consent.

Oscar, furious at being called a "little young man," remarked, as the other two were lighting their cigars:

"I am not the aide-de-camp of Mina, monsieur, and I have not yet been to the East, but I shall probably go there. The career to which my family destine me will spare me, I trust, the annoyances of travelling in a coucou before I reach your present age. When I once become a personage I shall know how to maintain my station."

"'Et cætera punctum!'" crowed Mistigris, imitating the hoarse voice of a young cock; which made Oscar's deliverance all the more absurd, because he had just reached the age when the beard sprouts and the voice breaks. "'What a chit for chat!'" added the rapin.

"Your family, young man, destine you to some career, do they?" said Georges. "Might I ask what it is?"

"Diplomacy," replied Oscar.

Three bursts of laughter came from Mistigris, the great painter, and the farmer. The count himself could not help smiling. Georges was perfectly grave.

"By Allah!" he exclaimed, "I see nothing to laugh at in that. Though it seems to me, young man, that your respectable mother is, at the present moment, not exactly in the social sphere of an ambassadress. She carried a handbag worthy of the utmost respect, and wore shoe-strings which —"

"My mother, monsieur!" exclaimed Oscar, in a tone of indignation. "That was the person in charge of our household."

"'Our household' is a very aristocratic term," remarked the count.

"Kings have households," replied Oscar, proudly. A look from Georges repressed the desire to laugh which took possession of everybody; he contrived to make Mistigris and the painter understand that it was necessary to manage Oscar cleverly in order to work this new mine of anusement.

"Monsieur is right," said the great Schinner to the count, motioning towards Oscar. "Well-bred people always talk of their 'households; it is only common persons like ourselves who say 'home.' For a man so covered with decorations—"

"'Nunc my eye, nunc alii,'" whispered Mistigris.

"—you seem to know little of the language of courts. I ask your future protection, Excellency," added Schinner, turning to Oscar.

"I congratulate myself on having travelled with three such distinguished men," said the count, — "a painter already famous, a future general, and a young diplomatist who may some day recover Belgium for France." Having committed the odious crime of repudiating his mother, Oscar, furious from a sense that his companions were laughing at him, now resolved, at any cost, to make them pay attention to him.

"' All is not gold that glitters,' " he began, his eyes flaming.

"That's not it," said Mistigris. "All is not old that titters." You'll never get on in diplomacy if you don't know your proverbs better than that."

"I may not know proverbs, but I know my way —"

"It must be far," said Georges, "for I saw that person in charge of your household give you provisions enough for an ocean voyage: rolls, chocolate—"

"A special kind of bread and chocolate, yes, monsieur," returned Oscar; "my stomach is much too delicate to digest the victuals of a tavern."

"'Victuals' is a word as delicate and refined as your stomach," said Georges.

"Ah! I like that word 'victuals,' " cried the great painter.

"The word is all the fashion in the best society," said Mistigris. "I use it myself at the café of the Black Hen."

"Your tutor is, doubtless, some celebrated professor, is n't he? — Monsieur Andrieux of the Académie Française, or Monsieur Royer-Collard?" asked Schinner.

- "My tutor is or was the Abbé Loraux, now vicar of Saint-Sulpice," replied Oscar, recollecting the name of the confessor at his school.
- "Well, you were right to take a private tutor," said Mistigris. "'Tuto, tutor, celeritus, and jocund." Of course, you will reward him well, your abbé?"
- "Undoubtedly he will be made a bishop some day," said Oscar.
- "By your family influence?" inquired Georges, gravely.
- "We shall probably contribute to his rise, for the Abbé Frayssinous is constantly at our house." .
- "Ah! you know the Abbé Frayssinous?" asked the count.
- "He is under obligations to my father," answered Oscar.
- "Are you on your way to your estate?" asked Georges.
- "No, monsieur; but I am able to say where I am going, if others are not. I am going to the Château de Presles, to the Comte de Sérizy."
- "The devil! are you going to Presles?" cried Schinner, turning as red as a cherry.
- "So you know his Excellency the Comte de Sérizy?" said Georges.

Père Léger turned round to look at Oscar with a stupefied air.

- "Is Monsieur de Sérizy at Presles?" he said.
- "Apparently, as I am going there," replied Oscar.
- "Do you often see the count?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.
- "Often," replied Oscar. "I am a comrade of his son, who is about my age, nineteen; we ride together on horseback nearly every day."
- "' Aut Cæsar, aut Sérizy,' " said Mistigris, sententiously.

Pierrotin and Père Léger exchanged winks on hearing this statement.

"Really," said the count to Oscar, "I am delighted to meet with a young man who can tell me about that personage. I want his influence in a rather serious matter, although it would cost him nothing to oblige me. It concerns a claim I wish to press on the American government. I should be glad to obtain information about Monsieur de Sérizy."

"Oh! if you want to succeed," replied Oscar, with a knowing look, "don't go to him, but go to his wife; he is madly in love with her; no one knows more than I do about that; but she can't endure him."

"Why not?" said Georges.

"The count has a skin disease which makes him hideous. Doctor Alibert has tried in vain to cure it. The count would give half his fortune if he had a chest like mine," said Oscar, swelling himself out. "He

lives a lonely life in his own house; gets up very early in the morning and works from three to eight o'clock; after eight he takes his remedies, — sulphurbaths, steam-baths, and such things. His valet bakes him in a sort of iron box — for he is always in hopes of getting cured."

"If he is such a friend of the King as they say he is, why does n't he get his Majesty to touch him?" asked Georges.

"The count has lately promised thirty thousand francs to a celebrated Scotch doctor who is coming over to treat him," continued Oscar.

"Then his wife can't be blamed if she finds better—" said Schinner, but he did not finish his sentence.

"I should say so!" resumed Oscar. "The poor man is so shrivelled and old you would take him for eighty! He's as dry as a parchment, and, unluckily for him, he feels his position."

"Most men would," said Père Léger.

"He adores his wife and dares not find fault with her," pursued Oscar, rejoicing to have found a topic to which they listened. "He plays scenes with her which would make you die of laughing, — exactly like Arnolphe in Molière's comedy."

The count, horror-stricken, looked at Pierrotin, who, finding that the count said nothing, concluded that Madame Clapart's son was telling falsehoods.

"So, monsieur," continued Oscar, "if you want the count's influence, I advise you to apply to the Marquis d'Aiglemont. If you get that former adorer of Madame de Sérizy on your side, you will win husband and wife at one stroke."

"Look here!" said the painter, "you seem to have seen the count without his clothes; are you his valet?"

"His valet!" cried Oscar.

"Hang it! people don't tell such things about their friends in public conveyances," exclaimed Mistigris. "As for me, I'm not listening to you; I'm deaf: discretion plays the better part of adder."

"'A poet is nasty and not fit,' and so is a talebearer," cried Schinner.

"Great painter," said Georges, sententiously, "learn this: you can't say harm of people you don't know. Now the little one here has proved, indubitably, that he knows his Sérizy by heart. If he had told us about the countess, perhaps—?"

"Stop! not a word about the Comtesse de Sérizy, young men," cried the count. "I am a friend of her brother, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, and whoever attempts to speak disparagingly of the countess must answer to me."

"Monsieur is right," cried the painter; "no man should blaguer women."

"God, Honor, and the Ladies! I believe in that melodrama," said Mistigris.

"I don't know the guerilla chieftain, Mina, but I know the Keeper of the Seals," continued the count, looking at Georges; "and though I don't wear my decorations," he added, looking at the painter, "I prevent those who do not deserve them from obtaining any. And finally, let me say that I know so many persons that I even know Monsieur Grindot, the architect of Presles. Pierrotin, stop at the next inn; I want to get out a moment."

Pierrotin hurried his horses through the village street of Moisselles, at the end of which was the inn where all travellers stopped. This short distance was done in silence.

"Where is that young fool going?" asked the count, drawing Pierrotin into the innyard.

"To your steward. He is the son of a poor lady who lives in the rue de la Cerisaie, to whom I often carry fruit, and game, and poultry from Presles. She is a Madame Husson."

"Who is that man?" inquired Père Léger of Pierrotin when the count had left him.

"Faith, I don't know," replied Pierrotin; "this is the first time I have driven him. I should n't be surprised if he was that prince who owns Maffliers. He has just told me to leave him on the road near there; he does n't want to go on to Isle-Adam." "Pierrotin thinks he is the master of Maffliers," said Père Léger, addressing Georges when he got back into the coach.

The three young fellows were now as dull as thieves caught in the act; they dared not look at each other, and were evidently considering the consequences of their fibs.

"This is what is called 'suffering for license sake,'" said Mistigris.

"You see I did know the count," said Oscar.

"Possibly. But you'll never be an ambassador," replied Georges. "When people want to talk in public conveyances, they ought to be careful, like me, to talk without saying anything."

"That's what speech is for," remarked Mistigris, by way of conclusion.

The count returned to his seat and the coucou rolled on amid the deepest silence.

"Well, my friends," said the count, when they reached the Carreau woods, "here we all are, as silent as if we were going to the scaffold."

"'Silence gives content," muttered Mistigris.

"The weather is fine," said Georges.

"What place is that?" said Oscar, pointing to the château de Franconville, which produces a fine effect at that particular spot, backed, as it is, by the noble forest of Saint-Martin. "How is it," cried the count, "that you, who say you go so often to Presles, do not know Franconville?"

"Monsieur knows men, not castles," said Mistigris.

"Budding diplomatists have so much else to take their minds," remarked Georges.

"Be so good as to remember my name," replied Oscar, furious. "I am Oscar Husson, and ten years hence I shall be famous."

After that speech, uttered with bombastic assumption, Oscar flung himself back in his corner.

"Husson of what, of where?" asked Mistigris.

"It is a great family," replied the count. "Husson de la Cerisaie; monsieur was born beneath the steps of the Imperial throne."

Oscar colored crimson to the roots of his hair, and was penetrated through and through with a dreadful foreboding.

They were now about to descend the steep hill of La Cave, at the foot of which, in a narrow valley, flanked by the forest of Saint-Martin, stands the magnificent château of Presles.

"Messieurs," said the count, "I wish you every good fortune in your various careers. Monsieur le colonel, make your peace with the King of France; the Czerni-Georges ought not to snub the Bourbons. I have nothing to wish for you, my dear Monsieur Schinner; your fame is already won, and nobly won by

splendid work. But you are much to be feared in domestic life, and I, being a married man, dare not invite you to my house. As for Monsieur Husson, he needs no protection; he possesses the secrets of statesmen and can make them tremble. Monsieur Léger is about to pluck the Comte de Sérizy, and I can only exhort him to do it with a firm hand. Pierrotin, put me out here, and pick me up at the same place to-morrow," added the count, who then left the coach and took a path through the woods, leaving his late companions confused and bewildered.

"He must be that count who has hired Franconville; that's the path to it," said Léger.

"If ever again," said the false Schinner. "I am caught blague-ing in a public coach, I 'll fight a duel with myself. It was your fault, Mistigris," giving his rapin a tap on the head.

"All I did was to help you out, and follow you to Venice," said Mistigris; "but that's always the way, 'Fortune belabors the slave.'"

"Let me tell you," said Georges to his neighbor Oscar, "that if, by chance, that was the Comte de Sérizy, I wouldn't be in your skin for a good deal, healthy as you think it."

Oscar, remembering his mother's injunctions, which these words recalled to his mind, turned pale and came to his senses. "Here you are, messieurs!" cried Pierrotin, pulling up at a fine iron gate.

"Here we are — where?" said the painter, and Georges, and Oscar all at once.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Pierrotin, "if that does n't beat all! Ah ça, messieurs, have none of you been here before? Why, this is the château de Presles."

"Oh, yes; all right, friend," said Georges, recovering his audacity. "But I happen to be going on to Les Moulineaux," he added, not wishing his companions to know that he was really going to the château.

"You don't say so? Then you are coming to me," said Père Léger.

"How so?"

"Why, I'm the farmer at Moulineaux. Hey, colonel, what brings you there?"

"To taste your butter," said Georges, pulling out his portfolio.

"Pierrotin," said Oscar, "leave my things at the steward's. I am going straight to the château."

Whereupon Oscar plunged into a narrow path, not knowing, in the least, where he was going.

"Hi! Monsieur l'ambassadeur," cried Père Léger, "that's the way to the forest; if you really want to get to the château, go through the little gate."

Thus compelled to enter, Oscar disappeared into the grand court-yard. While Père Léger stood watching

Oscar, Georges, utterly confounded by the discovery that the farmer was the present occupant of Les Moulineaux, had slipped away so adroitly that when the fat countryman looked round for his colonel there was no sign of him.

The iron gates opened at Pierrotin's demand, and he proudly drove in to deposit with the concierge the thousand and one utensils belonging to the great Schinner. Oscar was thunderstruck when he became aware that Mistigris and his master, the witnesses of his bravado, were to be installed in the château itself. In ten minutes Pierrotin had discharged the various packages of the painter, the bundles of Oscar Husson, and the pretty little leather portmanteau, which he took from its nest of hay and confided mysteriously to the wife of the concierge. Then he drove out of the courtyard, cracking his whip, and took the road that led through the forest to Isle-Adam, his face beaming with the sly expression of a peasant who calculates his profits. Nothing was lacking now to his happiness; on the morrow he would have his thousand francs, and, as a consequence, his magnificent new coach.

VI.

THE MOREAU INTERIOR.

OSCAR, somewhat abashed, was skulking behind a clump of trees in the centre of the court-yard, and watching to see what became of his two road-companions, when Monsieur Moreau suddenly came out upon the portico from what was called the guard-room. He was dressed in a long blue overcoat which came to his heels, breeches of yellowish leather and top-boots, and in his hand he carried a riding-whip.

"Ah! my boy, so here you are? How is the dear mamma?" he said, taking Oscar by the hand. "Goodday, messieurs," he added to Mistigris and his master, who then came forward. "You are, no doubt, the two painters whom Monsieur Grindot, the architect, told me to expect."

He whistled twice at the end of his whip; the concierge came.

"Take these gentlemen to rooms 14 and 15. Madame Moreau will give you the keys. Go with them to show the way; make fires there, if necessary, and take up all their things. I have orders from Monsieur

le comte," he added, addressing the two young men, "to invite you to my table, messieurs; we dine at five, as in Paris. If you like hunting, you will find plenty to amuse you; I have a license from the Eaux et Forêts; and we hunt over twelve thousand acres of forest, not counting our own domain."

Oscar, the painter, and Mistigris, all more or less subdued, exchanged glances, but Mistigris, faithful to himself, remarked, in a low tone, "'Veni, vidi, cecidi, — I came, I saw, I slaughtered."

Oscar followed the steward, who led him along at a rapid pace through the park.

"Jacques," said Moreau to one of his children whom they met, "run in and tell your mother that little Husson has come, and say to her that I am obliged to go to Les Moulineaux for a moment."

The steward, then about fifty years old, was a dark man of medium height, and seemed stern. His bilious complexion, to which country habits had added a certain violent coloring, conveyed, at first sight, the impression of a nature which was other than his own. His blue eyes and a large crow-beaked nose gave him an air that was the more threatening because his eyes were placed too close together. But his large lips, the outline of his face, and the easy good-humor of his manner soon showed that his nature was a kindly one. Abrupt in speech and decided in tone, he impressed

Oscar immensely by the force of his penetration, inspired, no doubt, by the affection which he felt for the boy. Trained by his mother to magnify the steward, Oscar had always felt himself very small in Moreau's presence; but on reaching Presles a new sensation came over him, as if he expected some harm from this fatherly friend, his only protector.

"Well, my Oscar, you don't look pleased at getting here," said the steward. "And yet you'll find plenty of amusement; you shall learn to ride on horseback, and shoot, and hunt."

"I don't know any of those things," said Oscar, stupidly.

"But I brought you here to learn them."

"Mamma told me only to stay two weeks because of Madame Moreau."

"Oh! we'll see about that," replied Moreau, rather wounded that his conjugal authority was doubted.

Moreau's youngest son, an active, strapping lad of twelve, here ran up.

"Come," said his father, "take Oscar to your mother."

He himself went rapidly along the shortest path to the gamekeeper's house, which was situated between the park and the forest.

The pavilion, or lodge, in which the count had established his steward, was built a few years before the

Revolution. It stood in the centre of a large garden, one wall of which adjoined the court-yard of the stables and offices of the château itself. Formerly its chief entrance was on the main road to the village. But after the count's father bought the building, he closed that entrance and united the place with his own property.

The house, built of freestone, in the style of the period of Louis XV. (it is enough to say that its exterior decoration consisted of a stone drapery beneath the windows, as in the colonnades of the Place Louis XV., the flutings of which were stiff and ungainly), had on the ground-floor a fine salon opening into a bedroom, and a dining-room connected with a billiard-room. These rooms, lying parallel to one another, were separated by a staircase, in front of which was a sort of peristyle which formed an entrance-hall, on which the two suites of rooms on either side opened. The kitchen was beneath the dining-room, for the whole building was raised ten steps from the ground level.

By placing her own bedroom on the first floor above the ground-floor, Madame Moreau was able to transform the chamber adjoining the salon into a boudoir. These two rooms were richly furnished with beautiful pieces culled from the rare old furniture of the château. The salon, hung with blue and white damask, formerly the curtains of the state-bed, was draped with ample portieres and window curtains lined with white silk. Pictures, evidently from old panels, plant-stands, various pretty articles of modern upholstery, handsome lamps, and a rare old cut-glass chandelier, gave a grandiose appearance to the room. The carpet was a Persian rug. The boudoir, wholly modern, and furnished entirely after Madame Moreau's own taste, was arranged in imitation of a tent, with ropes of blue silk on a gray background. The classic divan was there, of course, with its pillows and footstools The plant-stands, taken care of by the head-gardener of Presles, rejoiced the eye with their pyramids of bloom. The dining-room and billiard-room were furnished in mahogany.

Around the house the steward's wife had laid out a beautiful garden, carefully cultivated, which opened into the great park. Groups of choice trees hid the offices and stables. To improve the entrance by which visitors came to see her, she had substituted a handsome iron gateway for the shabby railing, which she discarded.

The dependence in which the situation of their dweiling placed the Moreaus, was thus advoiting concealed, and they seemed all the more like rich and independent persons taking care of the property of a friend, because neither the count nor the countess ever came to Presles to take down their pretensions. More-

over, the perquisites granted by Monsieur de Sérizy allowed them to live in the midst of that abundance which is the luxury of country life. Milk, eggs, poultry, game, fruits, flowers, forage, vegetables, wood, the steward and his wife used in profusion, buying absolutely nothing but butcher's-meat, wines, and the colonial supplies required by their life of luxury. The poultry-maid baked their bread; and of late years Moreau had paid his butcher with pigs from the farm, after reserving those he needed for his own use.

On one occasion, the countess, always kind and good to her former maid, gave her, as a souvenir perhaps, a little travelling-carriage, the fashion of which was out of date. Moreau had it repainted, and now drove his wife about the country with two good horses which belonged to the farm. Besides these horses, Moreau had his own saddle-horse. He did enough farming on the count's property to keep the horses and maintain his servants. He stacked three hundred tons of excellent hay, but accounted for only one hundred, making use of a vague permission once granted by the count. He kept his poultry-yard, pigeon-cotes, and cattle at the cost of the estate, but the manure of the stables was used by the count's gardeners. All these little stealings had some ostensible excuse.

Madaine Moreau had taken into her service a daugh-

ter of one of the gardeners, who was first her maid and afterwards her cook. The poultry-girl, also the dairy-maid, assisted in the work of the household; and the steward had hired a discharged soldier to groom the horses and do the heavy labor.

At Nerville, Chaumont, Maffliers, Nointel, and other places of the neighborhood, the handsome wife of the steward was received by persons who either did not know, or pretended not to know her previous con-Moreau did services to many persons. dition. induced his master to agree to certain things which seem trifles in Paris, but are really of immense importance in the country. After bringing about the appointment of a certain juge de paix at Beaumont and also at Isle-Adam, he had, in the same year, prevented the dismissal of a keeper-general of the Forests, and obtained the cross of the Legion of honor for the first cavalry-sergeant at Beaumont. Consequently, no festivity was ever given among the bourgeoisie to which Monsieur and Madame Moreau were not invited. The rector of Presles and the mayor of Presles came every evening to play cards with them. It is difficult for a man not to be kind and hospitable after feathering his nest so comfortably.

A pretty woman, and an affected one, as all retired waiting-maids of great ladies are, for after they are married they imitate their mistresses, Madame Moreau imported from Paris all the new fashions. She wore expensive boots, and never was seen on foot, except, occasionally, in the finest weather. Though her husband allowed but five hundred francs a year for her toilet, that sum is immense in the provinces, especially if well laid out. So that Madame Moreau, fair, rosy, and fresh, about thirty-six years of age, still slender and delicate in shape in spite of her three children, played the young girl and gave herself the airs of a princess. If, when she drove by in her calèche, some stranger had asked, "Who is she?" Madame Moreau would have been furious had she heard the reply: "The wife of the steward at Presles." She wished to be taken for the mistress of the château. In the villages, she patronized the people in the tone of a great lady. The influence of her husband over the count, proved in so many ways, prevented the small bourgeoisie from laughing at Madame Moreau, who, in the eyes of the peasants, was really a personage.

Estelle (her name was Estelle) took no more part in the affairs of the stewardship than the wife of a broker does in her husband's affairs at the Bourse. She even depended on Moreau for the care of the household and their own fortune. Confident of his means, she was a thousand leagues from dreaming that this comfortable existence, which had lasted for seventeen years, could

ever be endangered. And yet, when she heard of the count's determination to restore the magnificent château, she felt that her enjoyments were threatened, and she urged her husband to come to the arrangement with Léger about Les Moulineaux, so that they might retire from Presles and live at Isle-Adam. She had no intention of returning to a position that was more or less that of a servant in presence of her former mistress, who, indeed, would have laughed to see her established in the lodge with all the airs and graces of a woman of the world.

The rancorous enmity which existed between the Reyberts and the Moreaus came from a wound inflicted by Madame de Reybert upon Madame Moreau on the first occasion when the latter assumed precedence over the former on her first arrival at Presles, the wife of the steward being determined not to allow her supremacy to be undermined by a woman née de Corroy. Madame de Reybert thereupon reminded, or, perhaps, informed the whole country-side of Madame Moreau's former station. The words "waiting-maid" flew from lip to lip. The envious acquaintances of the Moreaus throughout the neighborhood from Beaumont to Moisselles, began to carp and criticise with such eagerness that a few sparks of the conflagration fell into the Moreau household. For four years the Reyberts, cut dead by the handsome Estelle, found themselves the objects of so much animadversion on the part of the adherents of the Moreaus that their position at Presles would not have been endurable without the thought of vengeance which had, so far, supported them.

The Moreaus, who were very friendly with Grindot the architect, had received notice from him of the early arrival of two painters sent down to finish the decorations of the château, the principal paintings for which were just completed by Schinner. The great painter had recommended for this work the artist who was accompanied by Mistigris. For two days past Madame Moreau had been on the tiptoe of expectation, and had put herself under arms to receive him. artist, who was to be her guest and companion for weeks, demanded some effort. Schinner and his wife had their own apartment at the château, where, by the count's express orders, they were treated with all the consideration due to himself. Grindot, who stayed at the steward's house, showed such respect for the great artist that neither the steward nor his wife had attempted to put themselves on familiar terms with him. Moreover, the noblest and richest people in the surrounding country had vied with each other in paying attention to Schinner and his wife. very well pleased to have, as it were, a little revenge of her own, Madame Moreau was determined to cry up the artist she was now expecting, and to present him

to her social circle as equal in talent to the great Schinner.

Though for two days past Moreau's pretty wife had arrayed herself coquettishly, the prettiest of her toilets had been reserved for this very Saturday, when, as she felt no doubt, the artist would arrive for dinner. A pink gown in very narrow stripes, a pink belt with a richly chased gold buckle, a velvet ribbon and cross at her throat, and velvet bracelets on her bare arms (Madame de Sérizy had handsome arms and showed them much), together with bronze kid shoes and thread stockings, gave Madame Moreau all the appearance of an elegant Parisian. She wore, also, a superb bonnet of Leghorn straw, trimmed with a bunch of moss roses from Nattier's, beneath the spreading sides of which rippled the curls of her beautiful blond hair.

After ordering a very choice dinner and reviewing the condition of her rooms, she walked about the grounds, so as to be seen standing near a flower-bed in the court-yard of the château, like the mistress of the house, on the arrival of the coach from Paris. She held above her head a charming rose-colored parasol lined with white silk and fringed. Seeing that Pierrotin merely left Mistigris's queer packages with the concierge, having, apparently, brought no passengers, Estelle retired disappointed and regretting the trouble of making her useless toilet. Like many persons

who are dressed in their best, she felt incapable of any other occupation than that of sitting idly in her salon awaiting the coach from Beaumont, which usually passed about an hour after that of Pierrotin, though it did not leave Paris till mid-day. She was, therefore, in her own apartment when the two artists walked up to the château, and were sent by Moreau himself to their rooms where they made their regulation toilet for dinner. The pair had asked questions of their guide, the gardener, who told them so much of Madame Moreau's beauty that they felt the necessity of "rigging themselves up" (studio slang). They, therefore, put on their most superlative suits and then walked over to the steward's lodge, piloted by Jacques Moreau, the eldest son, a hardy youth, dressed like an English boy in a handsome jacket with a turned-over collar, who was spending his vacation like a fish in water on the estate where his father and mother reigned as autocrats.

"Mamma," he said, "here are the two artists sent down by Monsieur Schinner."

Madame Moreau, agreeably surprised, rose, told her son to place chairs, and began to display her graces.

"Mamma, the Husson boy is with papa," added the lad; "shall I fetch him?"

"You need not hurry; go and play with him," said his mother.

The remark "you need not hurry" proved to the two artists the unimportance of their late travelling companion in the eyes of their hostess; but it also showed, what they did not know, the feeling of a step-mother against a step-son. Madame Moreau, after seventeen years of married life, could not be ignorant of the steward's attachment to Madame Clapart and the little Husson, and she hated both mother and child so vehemently that it is not surprising that Moreau had never before risked bringing Oscar to Presles.

"We are requested, my husband and myself," she said to the two artists, "to do you the honors of the château. We both love art, and, above all, artists," she added in a mineing tone; "and I beg you to make yourselves at home here. In the country, you know, every one should be at their ease; one must feel wholly at liberty, or life is too insipid. We have already had Monsieur Schinner with us."

Mistigris gave a sly glance at his companion.

"You know him, of course?" continued Estelle, after a slight pause.

"Who does not know him, madame?" said the painter.

"Knows him like his double," remarked Mistigris.

"Monsieur Grindot told me your name," said Madame Moreau to the painter. "But—"

"Joseph Bridau," he replied, wondering with what sort of woman he had to do.

Mistigris began to rebel internally against the patronizing manner of the steward's wife; but he waited, like Bridau, for some word which might give him his cue; one of those words de singe à dauphin which artists, cruel, born-observers of the ridiculous—the pabulum of their pencils—seize with such avidity. Meantime Estelle's clumsy hands and feet struck their eyes, and presently a word, a phrase or two, betraying her past, and quite out of keeping with the elegance of her dress, made the two young fellows aware of their prey. A single glance at each other was enough to arrange a scheme that they should take Estelle seriously on her own ground, and thus find amusement enough during the time of their stay.

"You say you love art, madame; perhaps you cultivate it successfully," said Joseph Bridau.

"No. Without being neglected, my education was purely commercial; but I have so profound and delicate a sense of art that Monsieur Schinner always asked me, when he had finished a piece of work, to give him my opinion on it."

"Just as Molière consulted La Forêt," said Mistigris.

Not knowing that La Forêt was. Molière's servantwoman, Madame Moreau inclined her head graciously, showing that in her ignorance she accepted the speech as a compliment. "Did n't he propose to croquer you?" asked Bridau. "Painters are eager enough after handsome women."

"What may you mean by such language?"

"In the studios we say croquer, craunch, nibble, for sketching," interposed Mistigris, with an insinuating air, "and we are always wanting to croquer beautiful heads. That's the origin of the expression, 'She is pretty enough to eat."

"I was not aware of the origin of the term," she replied, with the sweetest glance at Mistigris.

"My pupil here," said Bridau, "Monsieur Léon de Lora, shows a remarkable talent for portraiture. He would be too happy, I know, to leave you a souvenir of our stay by painting your charming head, madame."

Joseph Bridau made a sign to Mistigris which meant: "Come, sail in, and push the matter; she is not so bad in looks, this woman."

Accepting the glance, Léon de Lora slid down upon the sofa beside Estelle and took her hand, which she permitted.

"Oh! madame, if you would like to offer a surprise to your husband, and will give me a few secret sittings I would endeavor to surpass myself. You are so beautiful, so fresh, so charming! A man without any talent might become a genius in painting you. He would draw from your eyes—"

"We must paint your dear children in the arabesques," said Bridau, interrupting Mistigris.

"I would rather have them in the salon; but perhaps I am indiscreet in asking it," she replied, looking at Bridau coquettishly.

"Beauty, madame, is a sovereign whom all painters worship; it has unlimited claims upon them."

"They are both charming," thought Madame Moreau. "Do you enjoy driving? Shall I take you through the woods, after dinner, in my carriage?"

"Oh! oh!" cried Mistigris, in three ecstatic tones. "Why, Presles will prove our terrestrial paradise."

"With an Eve, a fair, young, fascinating woman," added Bridau.

Just as Madame Moreau was bridling, and soaring to the seventh heaven, she was recalled like a kite by a twitch at its line.

"Madame!" cried her maid-servant, bursting into the room.

"Rosalie," said her mistress, "who allowed you to come here without being sent for?"

Rosalie paid no heed to this rebuke, but whispered in her mistress's ear: —

"The count is at the château."

"Has he asked for me?" said the steward's wife.

"No, madame; but he wants his trunk and the key of his apartment."

"Then give them to him," she replied, making an impatient gesture to hide her real trouble.

"Mamma! here's Oscar Husson," said her youngest son, bringing in Oscar, who turned as red as a poppy on seeing the two artists in evening dress.

"Oh! so you have come, my little Oscar," said Estelle, stiffly. "I hope you will now go and dress," she added, after looking at him contemptuously from head to foot. "Your mother, I presume, has not accustomed you to dine in such clothes as those."

"Oh!" cried the cruel Mistigris, "a future diplomatist knows the saying that 'two coats are better than none."

"How do you mean, a future diplomatist?" exclaimed Madame Moreau.

Poor Oscar had tears in his eyes as he looked in turn from Joseph to Léon.

"Merely a joke made in travelling," replied Joseph, who wanted to save Oscar's feelings out of pity.

"The boy just wanted to be funny like the rest of us, and he blagued, that's all," said Mistigris.

"Madame," said Rosalie, returning to the door of the salon, "his Excellency has ordered dinner for eight, and wants it served at six o'clock. What are we to do?"

During Estelle's conference with her head-woman the two artists and Oscar looked at each other in consternation; their glances were expressive of terrible apprehension. "His Excellency! who is he?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Why, Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, of course," replied little Moreau.

"Could it have been the count in the concou?" said Léon de Lora.

"Oh!" exclaimed Oscar, "the Comte de Sérizy always travels in his own carriage with four horses.

"How did the Comte de Sérizy get here?" said the painter to Madame Moreau, when she returned, much discomfited, to the salon.

"I am sure I do not know," she said. "I cannot explain to myself this sudden arrival; nor do I know what has brought him — And Moreau not here!"

"His Excellency wishes Monsieur Schinner to come over to the château," said a gardener, coming to the door of the salon. "And he begs Monsieur Schinner to give him the pleasure to dine with him; also Monsieur Mistigris."

"Done for!" cried the rapin, laughing. "He whom we took for a bourgeois in the coucou was the count. You may well say: 'Sour are the curses of perversity.'"

Oscar was very nearly changed to a pillar of salt; for, at this revelation, his throat felt salter than the sea.

"And you, who talked to him about his wife's lovers and his skin diseases!" said Mistigris, turning on Oscar.

"What does he mean?" exclaimed the steward's wife, gazing after the two artists, who went away laughing at the expression of Oscar's face.

Oscar remained dumb, confounded, stupefied, hearing nothing, though Madame Moreau questioned him and shook him violently by his arm, which she caught and squeezed. She gained nothing, however, and was forced to leave him in the salon without an answer, for Rosalie appeared again, to ask for linen and silver, and to beg she would go herself and see that the multiplied orders of the count were executed. All the household, together with the gardeners and the concierge and his wife, were going and coming in a confusion that may readily be imagined. The master had fallen upon his own house like a bombshell.

From the top of the hill near La Cave, where he left the coach, the count had gone, by a path through the woods well-known to him, to the house of his gamekeeper. The keeper was amazed when he saw his real master.

"Is Moreau here?" said the count. "I see his horse."

"No, monseigneur; he means to go to Moulineaux before dinner, and he has left his horse here while he went to the château to give a few orders."

"If you value your place," said the count, "you will take that horse and ride at once to Beaumont, where

you will deliver to Monsieur Margueron the note that I shall now write."

So saying the count entered the keeper's lodge and wrote a line, folding it in a way impossible to open without detection, and gave it to the man as soon as he saw him in the saddle.

"Not a word to any one," he said, "and as for you, madame," he added to the gamekeeper's wife, "if Moreau comes back for his horse, tell him merely that I have taken it."

The count then crossed the park and entered the court-vard of the château through the iron gates. However worn-out a man may be by the wear and tear of public life, by his own emotions, by his own mistakes and disappointments, the soul of any man able to love deeply at the count's age is still young and sensitive to treachery. Monsieur de Sérizy had felt such pain at the thought that Moreau had deceived him, that even after hearing the conversation at Saint-Brice he thought him less an accomplice of Léger and the notary than their On the threshold of the inn, and while that conversation was still going on, he thought of pardoning his stewarl after giving him a good reproof. Strange to say, the dishonesty of his confidential agent occupied his mind as a mere episode from the moment when Oscar revealed his infirmities. Secrets so carefully guarded could only have been revealed by Moreau,

who had, no doubt, laughed over the hidden troubles of his benefactor with either Madame de Sérizy's former maid or with the Aspasia of the Directory.

As he walked along the wood-path, this peer of France, this statesman, wept as young men weep; he wept his last tears. All human feelings were so cruelly hurt by one stroke that the usually calm man staggered through his park like a wounded deer.

When Moreau arrived at the gamekeeper's lodge and asked for his horse, the keeper's wife replied: —

"Monsieur le comte has just taken it."

"Monsieur le comte!" cried Moreau. "Whom do you mean?"

"Why, the Comte de Sérizy, our master," she replied. "He is probably at the château by this time," she added, anxious to be rid of the steward, who, unable to understand the meaning of her words, turned back towards the château.

But he presently turned again and came back to the lodge, intending to question the woman more closely; for he began to see something serious in this secret arrival, and the apparently strange method of his master's return. But the wife of the gamekeeper, alarmed to find herself caught in a vise between the count and his steward, had locked herself into the house, resolved not to open to any but her husband. Moreau, more and more uneasy, ran rapidly, in spite of

his boots and spurs, to the château, where he was told that the count was dressing.

"Seven persons invited to dinner!" cried Rosalie as soon as she saw him.

Moreau then went through the offices to his own house. On his way he met the poultry-girl, who was having an altercation with a handsome young man.

- "Monsieur le comte particularly told me a colonel, an aide-de-camp of Mina," insisted the girl.
 - "I am not a colonel," replied Georges.
 - "But is n't your name Georges?"
 - "What's all this?" said the steward, intervening.
- "Monsieur, my name is Georges Marest; I am the son of a rich wholesale ironmonger in the rue Saint-Martin; I come on business to Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy from Maître Crottat, a notary, whose second clerk I am."
- "And I," said the girl, "am telling him that monseigneur said to me: 'There'll come a colonel named Czerni-Georges, aide-de-camp to Mina; he'll come by Pierrotin's coach; if he asks for me show him into the waiting-room.'"
- "Evidently," said the clerk, "the count is a traveller who came down with us in Pierrotin's *concou*; if it had n't been for the politeness of a young man he'd have come as a rabbit."
- "A rabbit! in Pierrotin's coucou!" exclaimed Moreau and the poultry-girl together.

"I am sure of it, from what this girl is now saying," said Georges.

"How so?" asked the steward.

"Ah! that's the point," cried the clerk. "To hoax the travellers and have a bit of fun I told them a lot of stuff about Egypt and Greece and Spain. As I happened to be wearing spurs I gave myself out for a colonel of cavalry; pure nonsense!"

"Tell me," said Moreau, "what did this traveller you take to be Monsieur le comte look like?"

"Face like a brick," said Georges, "hair snow-white, and black eyebrows."

"That is he!"

"Then I'm lost!" exclaimed Georges.

"Why?"

"Oh! I chaffed him about his decorations."

"Pooh! he's a good fellow; you probably amused him. Come at once to the château. I'll go in and see his Excellency. Where did you say he left the coach?"

"At the top of the mountain."

"I don't know what to make of it!"

"After all," thought Georges, "though I did blague him, I did n't say anything insulting."

"Why have you come here?" asked the steward.

"I have brought the deed of sale for the farm at Moulineaux, all ready for signature."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the steward, "I don't understand one word of all this!"

Moreau felt his heart beat painfully when, after giving two raps on his master's door, he heard the words:—

"Is that you, Monsieur Moreau?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Come in."

The count was now wearing a pair of white trousers and thin boots, a white waistcoat and a black coat on which shone the grand cross of the Legion upon the right breast, and fastened to a buttonhole on the left was the order of the Golden Fleece hanging by a short gold chain. He had arranged his hair himself, and had, no doubt, put himself in full dress to do the honors of Presles to Monsieur Margueron; and, possibly, to impress the good man's mind with a prestige of grandeur.

"Well, monsieur," said the count, who remained seated, leaving Moreau to stand before him. "We have not concluded that purchase from Margueron."

"He asks too much for the farm at the present moment."

"But why is he not coming to dinner as I requested?"

"Monseigneur, he is ill."

[&]quot;Are you sure?"

"I have just come from there."

"Monsieur," said the count, with a stern air which was really terrible, "what would you do with a man whom you trusted, if, after seeing you dress wounds which you desired to keep secret from all the world, he should reveal your misfortunes and laugh at your malady with a strumpet?"

"I would thrash him for it."

"And if you discovered that he was also betraying your confidence and robbing you?"

"I should endeavor to detect him, and send him to the galleys."

"Monsieur Moreau, listen to me. You have undoubtedly spoken of my infirmities to Madame Clapart; you have laughed at her house, and with her, over my attachment to the Comtesse de Sérizy; for her son, little Husson, told a number of circumstances relating to my medical treatment, to travellers by a public conveyance in my presence, and Heaven knows in what language! He dared to calumniate my wife. Besides this, I learned from the lips of Père Léger himself, who was in the coach, of the plan laid by the notary at Beaumont and by you and by himself in relation to Les Moulineaux. If you have been, as you say, to Monsieur Margueron, it was to tell him to feign illness. He is so little ill that he is coming here to dinner this evening. Now, monsieur, I could pardon

your having made two hundred and fifty thousand francs out of your situation in seventeen years, — I can understand that. You might each time have asked me for what you took, and I would have given it to you; but let that pass. You have been, notwithstanding this disloyalty, better than others, as I believe. But that you, who knew my toil for our country, for France, you have seen me giving night after night to the Emperor's service, and working eighteen hours of each twenty-four for months together, you who knew my love for Madame de Sérizy, — that you should have gossiped about me before a boy! holding up my secrets and my affections to the ridicule of a Madame Husson! — "

"Monseigneur!"

"It is unpardonable. To injure a man's interest, why, that is nothing; but to stab his heart! — Oh! you do not know what you have done!"

The count put his head in his hands and was silent for some moments.

"I leave you what you have gained," he said after a time, "and I shall forget you. For my sake, for my dignity, and for your honor, we will part decently; for I cannot but remember even now what your father did for mine. You will explain the duties of the stewardship in a proper manner to Monsieur de Reybert, who succeeds you. Be calm, as I am. Give no

opportunity for fools to talk. Above all, let there be no recrimination or petty meanness. Though you no longer possess my confidence, endeavor to behave with the decorum of well-bred persons. As for that miserable boy who has wounded me to death, I will not have him sleep at Presles; send him to the inn; I will not answer for my own temper if I see him."

"I do not deserve such gentleness, monseigneur," said Moreau, with tears in his eyes. "Yes, you are right; if I had been utterly dishonest I should now be worth five hundred thousand francs instead of half that sum. I offer to give you an account of my fortune, with all its details. But let me tell you, monseigneur, that in talking of you with Madame Clapart, it was never in derision; but, on the contrary, to deplore your state, and to ask her for certain remedies, not used by physicians, but known to the common people. I spoke of your feelings before the boy, who was in his bed and, as I supposed, asleep (it seems he must have been awake and listening to us), with the utmost affection and respect. Alas! fate wills that indiscretions be punished like crimes. But while accepting the results of your just anger, I wish you to know what actually took place It was, indeed, from heart to heart that I spoke of you to Madame Clapart. As for my wife, I have never said one word of these things -- "

"Enough," said the count, whose conviction was now complete; "we are not children. All is now irrevocable. Put your affairs and mine in order. You can stay in the pavilion until October. Monsieur and Madame de Reybert will lodge for the present in the château; endeavor to keep on terms with them, like well-bred persons who hate each other, but still keep up appearances."

The count and Moreau went downstairs; Moreau white as the count's hair, the count himself calm and dignified.

During the time this interview lasted the Beaumont coach, which left Paris at one o'clock, had stopped before the gates of the château, and deposited Maître Crottat, the notary, who was shown, according to the count's orders, into the salon, where he found his clerk, extremely subdued in manner, and the two painters, all three of them painfully self-conscious and embarrassed. Monsieur de Reybert, a man of fifty, with a crabbed expression of face, was also there, accompanied by old Margueron and the notary of Beaumont, who held in his hand a bundle of deeds and other papers.

When these various personages saw 'the count in evening dress, and wearing his orders, Georges Marest had a slight sensation of colic, Joseph Bridau quivered, but Mistigris, who was conscious of being in

his Sunday clothes, and had, moreover, nothing on his conscience, remarked, in a sufficiently loud tone:

"Well, he looks a great deal better like that."

"Little scamp," said the count, catching him by the ear, "we are both in the decoration business. I hope you recognize your own work, my dear Schinner," he added, pointing to the ceiling of the salon.

"Monseigneur," replied the artist, "I did wrong to take such a celebrated name out of mere bravado; but this day will oblige me to do fine things for you, and so bring credit on my own name of Joseph Bridau."

"You took up my defence," said the count, hastily; "and I hope you will give me the pleasure of dining with me, as well as my lively friend Mistigris."

"Your Excellency does n't know to what you expose yourself," said the saucy rapin; " facilis descensus victuali, as we say at the Black Hen."

"Bridau!" exclaimed the minister, struck by a sudden thought. "Are you any relation to one of the most devoted toilers under the Empire, the head of a bureau, who fell a victim to his zeal?"

"His son, monseigneur," replied Joseph, bowing.

"Then you are most welcome here," said the count, taking Bridau's hand in both of his. "I knew your father, and you can count on me as on — on an uncle in America," added the count, laughing. "But you are too young to have pupils of your own; to whom does Mistigris really belong?"

"To my friend Schinner, who lent him to me," said Joseph. "Mistigris' name is Léon de Lora. Monseigneur, if you knew my father, will you deign to think of his other son, who is now accused of plotting against the State, and is soon to be tried before the Court of Peers?"

"Ah! that's true," said the count. "Yes, I will think about it, be sure of that. As for Colonel Czerni-Georges, the friend of Ali Pacha, and Mina's aide-decamp—" he continued, walking up to Georges.

"He! why that's my second clerk!" cried Crottat.

"You are quite mistaken, Maître Crottat," said the count, assuming a stern air. "A clerk who intends to be a notary does not leave important deeds in a diligence at the mercy of other travellers; neither does he spend twenty francs between Paris and Moisselles; or expose himself to be arrested as a deserter—"

"Monseigneur," said Georges Marest, "I may have amused myself with the bourgeois in the diligence, but —"

"Let his Excellency finish what he was saying," said the notary, digging his elbow into his clerk's ribs.

"A notary," continued the count, "ought to practise discretion, shrewdness, caution from the start; he should be incapable of such a blunder as taking a peer of France for a tallow-chandler—"

"I am willing to be blamed for my faults," said

Georges; "but I never left my deeds at the mercy of —"

"Now you are committing the fault of contradicting the word of a minister of State, a gentleman, an old man, and a client," said the count. "Give me that deed of sale."

Georges turned over and over the papers in his portfolio.

"That will do; don't disarrange those papers," said the count, taking the deed from his pocket. "Here is what you are looking for."

Crottat turned the paper back and forth, so astonished was he at receiving it from the hands of his client.

"What does this mean, monsieur?" he said, finally, to Georges.

"If I had not taken it," said the count, "Père Léger, — who is by no means such a ninny as you thought him from his questions about agriculture, by which he showed that he attended to his own business, — Père Léger might have seized that paper and guessed my purpose. You must give me the pleasure of dining with me, but on one condition, — that of describing, as you promised, the execution of the Muslim of Smyrna, and you must also finish the memoirs of some client which you have certainly read to be so well informed."

"Schlague for blague!" said Léon de Lora, in a whisper, to Joseph Bridau.

"Gentlemen," said the count to the two notaries and Messieurs Margueron and de Reybert, "let us go into the next room and conclude this business before dinner, because, as my friend Mistigris would say: 'Qui esurit consentit.'"

"Well, he is very good-natured," said Léon de Lora to Georges, Marest, when the count had left the room.

"Yes, he may be, but my master is n't," said Georges, "and he will request me to go and blaguer somewhere else."

."Never mind, you like travel," said Bridau.

"What a dressing that boy will get from Monsieur and Madame Moreau!" cried Mistigris.

"Little idiot!" said Georges. "If it had n't been for him the count would have been amused. Well, anyhow, the lesson is a good one; and if ever again I am caught bragging in a public coach—"

"It is a stupid thing to do," said Joseph Bridau.

"And common," added Mistigris. "' Vulgarity is the brother of pretension."

While the matter of the sale was being settled between Monsieur Margneron and the Comte de Sérizy. assisted by their respective notaries in presence of Monsieur de Reybert, the ex-steward walked with slow steps to his own house. There he entered the salon and sat down without noticing anything. Little Husson, who was present, slipped into a corner, out of sight, so much did the livid face of his mother's friend alarm him.

"Eh! my friend!" said Estelle, coming into the room, somewhat tired with what she had been doing. "What is the matter?"

"My dear, we are lost, — lost beyond recovery. I am no longer steward of Presles, no longer in the count's confidence."

"Why not?"

"Père Léger, who was in Pierrotin's coach, told the count all about the affair of Les Moulineaux. But that is not the thing that has cost me his favor."

"What, then?"

"Oscar spoke ill of the countess, and he told about the count's diseases."

"Oscar!" cried Madame Moreau. "Ah! my dear, your sin has found you out. It was well worth while to warm that young serpent in your bosom. How often I have told you —"

"Enough!" said Moreau, in a strained voice.

At this moment Estelle and her husband discovered Oscar cowering in his corner. Moreau swooped down on the luckless lad like a hawk on its prey, took him by the collar of his coat and dragged him to the light of a window. "Speak! what did you say to mon-

seigneur in that coach? What demon let loose your tongue, you who keep a doltish silence whenever I speak to you? What did you do it for?" cried the steward, with frightful violence.

Too bewildered to weep, Oscar was dumb and motionless as a statue.

"Come with me and beg his Excellency's pardon," said Moreau.

"As if his Excellency cares for a little toad like that!" cried the furious Estelle.

"Come, I say, to the château," repeated Moreau.

Oscar dropped like an inert mass to the ground.

"Come!" cried Moreau, his anger increasing at every instant.

"No! no! mercy!" cried Oscar, who could not bring himself to submit to a torture that seemed to him worse than death.

Moreau then took the lad by his coat, and dragged him, as he might a dead body, through the yards, which rang with the boy's outcries and sobs. He pulled him up the portico, and, with an arm that fury made powerful, he flung him, bellowing, and rigid as a pole, into the salon, at the very feet of the count, who, having completed the purchase of Les Moulineaux, was about to leave the salon for the diningroom with his guests.

"On your knees, wretched boy! and ask pardon of

him who gave food to your mind by obtaining your scholarship."

Oscar, his face to the ground, was foaming with rage, and did not say a word. The spectators of the scene were shocked. Moreau seemed no longer in his senses; his face was crimson with injected blood.

"This young man-is a mere lump of vanity," said the count, after waiting a moment for Oscar's excuses. "A proud man humiliates himself because he sees there is grandeur in a certain self-abasement. I am afraid that you will never make much of that lad."

So saying, his Excellency passed on. Moreau took Oscar home with him; and on the way gave orders that the horses should immediately be put to Madame Moreau's calèche.

VII.

A MOTHER'S TRIALS.

While the horses were being harnessed, Moreau wrote the following letter to Madame Clapart:—

My Dear, — Oscar has ruined me. During his journey in Pierrotin's coach, he spoke of Madame de Sérizy's behavior to his Excellency, who was travelling incognito, and actually told, to himself, the secret of his terrible malady. After dismissing me from my stewardship, the count told me not to let Oscar sleep at Presles, but to send him away immediately. Therefore, to obey his orders, the horses are being harnessed at this moment to my wife's carriage, and Brochon, my stable-man, will take the miserable child to you to-night.

We are, my wife and I, in a distress of mind which you may perhaps imagine, though I cannot describe it to you. I will see you in a few days, for I must take another course. I have three children, and I ought to consider their future. At present I do not know what to do; but I shall certainly endeavor to make the count aware of what seventeen years of the life of a man like myself is worth. Owning at the present moment about two hundred and fifty thousand francs, I want to raise myself to a fortune which may some day make me the equal of his Excellency. At this moment I feel within me the power to move mountains and van-

quish insurmountable difficulties. What a lever is such a scene of bitter humiliation as I have just passed through! Whose blood has Oscar in his veius? His conduct has been that of a blockhead; up to this moment when I write to you, he has not said a word nor answered, even by a sign, the questions my wife and I have put to him. Will he become an idiot? or is he one already? Dear friend, why did you not instruct him as to his behavior before you sent him to me? How many misfortunes you would have spared me, had you brought him here yourself as I begged you to do. If Estelle alarmed you, you might have stayed at Moisselles. However, the thing is done, and there is no use talking about it.

Adieu; I shall see you soon.

Your devoted servant and friend,

MOREAU.

At eight o'clock that evening, Madame Clapart, just returned from a walk she had taken with her husband, was knitting winter socks for Oscar, by the light of a single candle. Monsieur Clapart was expecting a friend named Poiret, who often came in to play dominoes, for never did he allow himself to spend an evening at a café. In spite of the prudent economy to which his small means forced him, Clapart would not have answered for his temperance amid a luxury of food and in presence of the usual guests of a café whose inquisitive observation would have piqued him.

"I'm afraid Poiret came while we were out," said Clapart to his wife.

- "Why, no, my friend; the portress would have told us so when we came in," replied Madame Clapart.
 - "She may have forgotten it."
 - "What makes you think so?"
- "It would n't be the first time she has forgotten things for us, — for God knows how people without means are treated."
- "Well," said the poor woman, to change the conversation and escape Clapart's cavilling, "Oscar must be at Presles by this time. How he will enjoy that fine house and the beautiful park."
- "Oh! yes," snarled Clapart, "you expect fine things of him; but, mark my words, there'll be squabbles wherever he goes."
- "Will you never cease to find fault with that poor child?" said the mother. "What has he done to you? If some day we should live at our ease, we may owe it all to him; he has such a good heart—"
- "Our bones will be jelly long before that fellow makes his way in the world," cried Clapart. "You don't know your own child; he is conceited, boastful, deceitful, lazy, incapable of —"
- "Why don't you go to meet Poiret?" said the poor mother, struck to the heart by the diatribe she had brought upon herself.
- "A boy who has never won a prize at school!" continued Clapart.

To bourgeois eyes, the obtaining of school prizes means the certainty of a fine future for the fortunate child.

"Did you win any?" asked his wife. "Oscar stood second in philosophy."

This remark imposed silence for a moment on Clapart; but presently he began again.

- "Besides, Madame Moreau hates him like poison, you know why. She'll try to set her husband against him. Oscar to step into his shoes as steward of Presles! Why he'd have to learn agriculture, and know how to survey."
 - "He can learn."
- "He that pussy-cat! I'll bet that if he does get a place down there, it won't be a week before he does some doltish thing which will make the count dismiss him."
- "Good God! how can you be so bitter against a poor child who is full of good qualities, sweet-tempered as an angel, incapable of doing harm to any one, no matter who."

Just then the cracking of a postilion's whip and the noise of a carriage stopping before the house was heard, this arrival having apparently put the whole street into a commotion. Clapart, who heard the opening of many windows, looked out himself to see what was happening.

- "They have sent Oscar back to you in a post-chaise," he cried, in a tone of satisfaction, though in truth he felt inwardly uneasy.
- "Good heavens! what can have happened to him?" cried the poor mother, trembling like a leaf shaken by the autumn wind.

Brochon here came up, followed by Oscar and Poiret.

- "What has happened?" repeated the mother, addressing the stable-man.
- "I don't know: but Monsieur Moreau is no longer steward of Presles, and they say your son has caused it. His Excellency ordered that he should be sent home to you. Here's a letter from poor Monsieur Moreau, madame, which will tell you all. You never saw a man so changed in a single day."
- "Clapart, two glasses of wine for the postilion and for monsieur!" cried the mother, flinging herself into a chair that she might read the fatal letter. "Oscar," she said, staggering towards her bed, "do you want to kill your mother? After all the cautions that I gave you this morning—"

She did not end her sentence, for she fainted from distress of mind. When she came to herself she heard her husband saying to Oscar, as he shook him by the arm:—

[&]quot;Will you answer me?"

"Go to bed, monsieur," she said to her son. "Let him alone, Monsieur Clapart. Don't drive him out of his senses; he is frightfully changed."

Oscar did not hear his mother's last words; he had slipped away to bed the instant that he got the order.

Those who remember their youth will not be surprised to learn that after a day so filled with events and emotions, Oscar, in spite of the enormity of his offences, slept the sleep of the just. The next day he did not find the world so changed as he thought it; he was surprised to be very hungry, - he who the night before had regarded himself as unworthy to live. He had only suffered mentally. At his age mental impressions succeed each other so rapidly that the last weakens its predecessor, however deeply the first may have been cut in. For this reason corporal punishment, though philanthropists are deeply opposed to it in these days, becomes necessary in certain cases for certain children. It is, moreover, the most natural form of retribution, for Nature herself employs it; she uses pain to impress a lasting memory of her precepts. If to the shame of the preceding evening, unhappily too transient, the steward had joined some personal chastisement, perhaps the lesson might have been complete. The discernment with which such punishment needs to be administered is the greatest argument against it. Nature is never mistaken; but the teacher is, and frequently.

Madame Clapart took pains to send her husband out, so that she might be alone with her son the next morning. She was in a state to excite pity. Her eyes, worn with tears; her face, weary with the fatigue of a sleepless night; her feeble voice, — in short, everything about her proved an excess of suffering she could not have borne a second time, and appealed to sympathy.

When Oscar entered the room she signed to him to sit down beside her, and reminded him in a gentle but grieved voice of the benefits they had so constantly received from the steward of Presles. She told him that they had lived, especially for the last six years, on the delicate charity of Monsieur Moreau; and that Monsieur Clapart's salary, also the demi-bourse, or scholarship, by which he (Oscar) had obtained an education, was due to the Comte de Sérizy. Most of this would now cease. Monsieur Clapart, she said, had no claim to a pension, — his period of service not being long enough to obtain one. On the day when he was no longer able to keep his place, what would become of them?

"For myself," she said, "by nursing the sick, or living as housekeeper in some great family, I could support myself and Monsieur Clapart; but you, Oscar, what could you do? You have no means, and you must earn some, for you must live. There are but four careers for a young man like you, — commerce, govern-

ment employment, the licensed professions, or military service. All forms of commerce need capital, and we have none to give you. In place of capital, a young man can only give devotion and his capacity. But commerce also demands the utmost discretion, and your conduct yesterday proves that you lack it. To enter a government office, you must go through a long probation by the help of influence, and you have just alienated the only protector that we had, — a most powerful one. Besides, suppose you were to meet with some extraordinary help, by which a young man makes his way promptly either in business or in the public employ, where could you find the money to live and clothe yourself during the time that you are learning your employment?"

Here the mother wandered, like other women, into wordy lamentation: What should she do now to feed the family, deprived of the benefits Moreau's stewardship had enabled him to send her from Presles? Oscar had overthrown his benefactor's prosperity! As commerce and a government clerkship were now impossible, there remained only the professions of notary and lawyer, either barristers or solicitors, and sheriffs. But for those he must study at least three years, and pay considerable sums for entrance fees, examinations, certificates, and diplomas; and here again the question of maintenance presented itself.

"Oscar," she said, in conclusion, "in you I had put all my pride, all my life. In accepting for myself an unhappy old age, I fastened my eyes on you; I saw you with the prospect of a fine career, and I imagined you succeeding in it. That thought, that hope, gave me courage to face the privations I have endured for six years in order to carry you through school, where you have cost me, in spite of the scholarship, between seven and eight hundred francs a year. Now that my hope is vanishing, your future terrifies me. I cannot take one penny from Monsieur Clapart's salary for my son. What can you do? You are not strong enough in mathematics to enter any of the technical schools: and, besides, where could I get the three thousand francs board-money which they exact? This is life as it is, my child. You are eighteen; you are strong. Enlist in the army; it is your only means, that I can see, to earn your bread."

Oscar knew as yet nothing whatever of life. Like all children who have been kept from a knowledge of the trials and poverty of the home, he was ignorant of the necessity of earning his living. The word "commerce" presented no idea whatever to his mind; "public employment" said almost as little, for he saw no results of it. He listened, therefore, with a submissive air, which he tried to make humble, to his mother's exhortations, but they were lost in the void,

and did not reach his mind. Nevertheless, the word "army," the thought of being a soldier, and the sight of his mother's tears did at last make him cry. No sooner did Madame Clapart see the drops coursing down his cheeks than she felt herself helpless, and, like most mothers in such cases, she began the peroration which terminates these scenes, — scenes in which they suffer their own anguish and that of their children also.

"Well, Oscar, promise me that you will be more discreet in future,—that you will not talk heedlessly any more, but will strive to repress your silly vanity," et cetera, et cetera.

Oscar of course promised all his mother asked him to promise, and then, after gently drawing him to her, Madame Clapart ended by kissing him to console him for being scolded.

"In future," she said, "you will listen to your mother, and will follow her advice; for a mother can give nothing but good counsel to her child. We will go and see your uncle Cardot; that is our last hope. Cardot owed a great deal to your father, who gave him his sister, Mademoiselle Husson, with an enormous dowry for those days, which enabled him to make a large fortune in the silk trade. I think he might, perhaps, place you with Monsieur Camusot, his successor and son-in-law, in the rue des Bourdonnais. But, you

see, your uncle Cardot has four children. He gave his establishment, the Cocon d'Or, to his eldest daughter, Madame Camusot; and though Camusot has millions, he has also four children by two wives; and, besides, he scarcely knows of our existence. Cardot has married his second daughter, Mariane, to Monsieur Protèz, of the firm of Protez and Chiffreville. The practice of his eldest son, the notary, cost him four hundred thousand francs; and he has just put his second son, Joseph, into the drug business of Matifat. So you see. your uncle Cardot has many reasons not to take an interest in you, whom he sees only four times a year. He has never come to call upon me here, though he was ready enough to visit me at Madame Mère's when he wanted to sell his silks to the Emperor, the imperial highnesses, and all the great people at court. But now the Camusots have turned ultras. The eldest son of Camusot's first wife married a daughter of one of the king's ushers. The world is mighty hump-backed when it stoops! However, it was a clever thing to do, for the Cocon d'Or has the custom of the present court as it had that of the Emperor. But to-morrow we will go and see your uncle Cardot, and I bope that you will endeavor to behave properly; for, as I said before, and I repeat it, that is our last hope."

Monsieur Jean-Jérôme-Séverin Cardot had been a widower six years. As head-clerk of the Cocon d'Or,

one of the oldest firms in Paris, he had bought the establishment in 1793, at a time when the heads of the house were ruined by the maximum; and the money of Mademoiselle Husson's dowry had enabled him to do this, and so make a fortune that was almost colossal in ten years. To establish his children richly during his lifetime, he had conceived the idea of buying an annuity for himself and his wife with three hundred thousand francs, which gave him an income of thirty thousand francs a year. He then divided his capital. into three shares of four hundred thousand francs each. which he gave to three of his children, - the Cocon d'Or, given to his eldest daughter on her marriage, being the equivalent of a fourth share. Thus the worthy man, who was now nearly seventy years old, could spend his thirty thousand a year as he pleased, without feeling that he injured the prospects of his children, all finely provided for, whose attentions and proofs of affection were, moreover, not prompted by selfinterest.

Uncle Cardot lived at Belleville, in one of the first houses above the Courtille. He there occupied, on the first floor, an apartment overlooking the valley of the Seine, with a southern exposure, and the exclusive enjoyment of a large garden, for the sum of a thousand francs a year. He troubled himself not at all about the three or four other tenants of the same vast country-

Certain, through a long lease, of ending his days there, he lived rather plainly, served by an old cook and the former maid of the late Madame Cardot, - both of whom expected to reap an annuity of some six hundred francs apiece on the old man's death. These two women took the utmost care of him, and were all the more interested in doing so because no one was ever less fussy or less fault-finding than he. The apartment, furnished by the late Madame Cardot, had remained in the same condition for the last six years. - the old man being perfectly contented with it. He spent in all not more than three thousand francs a year there; for he dined in Paris five days in the week, and returned home at midnight in a hackney-coach, which belonged to an establishment at Courtille. The cook had only her master's breakfast to provide on those days. This was served at eleven o'clock; after that he dressed and perfumed himself, and departed for Paris. Usually, a bourgeois gives notice in the household if he dines out; old Cardot, on the contrary, gave notice when he dined at home.

This little old man—fat, rosy, squat, and strong—always looked, in popular speech, as if he had stepped from a bandbox. He appeared in black silk stockings, breeches of *pou-de-soie* (paduasoy), a white piqué waistcoat, dazzling shirt-front, a blue-bottle coat, violet silk gloves, gold buckles to his shoes and his breeches,

and, lastly, a touch of powder and a little queue tied with black ribbon. His face was remarkable for a pair of eyebrows as thick as bushes, beneath which sparkled his gray eyes; and for a square nose, thick and long, which gave him somewhat the air of the abbés of former times. His countenance did not belie him. Père Cardot belonged to that race of lively Gérontes which is now disappearing rapidly, though it once served as Turcarets to the comedies and tales of the eighteenth century. Uncle Cardot always said "Fair lady," and he placed in their carriages, and otherwise paid attention to those women whom he saw without protectors; he "placed himself at their disposition," as he said, in his chivalrous way.

But beneath his calm air and his snowy poll he concealed an old age almost wholly given up to mere pleasure. Among men he openly professed epicureanism, and gave himself the license of free talk. He had seen no harm in the devotion of his son-in-law, Camusot, to Mademoiselle Coralie, for he himself was secretly the Mecænas of Mademoiselle Florentine, the first danseuse at the Gaicté. But this life and these opinions never appeared in his own home, nor in his external conduct before the world. Uncle Cardot, grave and polite, was thought to be somewhat cold, so much did he affect decorum; a dévote would have called him a hypocrite.

The worthy old gentleman hated priests; he belonged to that great flock of ninnies who subscribed to the "Constitutionnel," and was much concerned about "refusals to bury." He adored Voltaire, though his preferences were really for Piron, Vadé, and Collé. Naturally, he admired Béranger, whom he wittily called the "grandfather of the religion of Lisette." His daughters, Madame Camusot and Madame Protèz, and his two sons would, to use a popular expression, have been flabbergasted if any one had explained to them what their father meant by "singing la Mère Godichon."

This long-headed parent had never mentioned his income to his children, who, seeing that he lived in a cheap way, reflected that he had deprived himself of his property for their sakes, and, therefore, redoubled their attentions and tenderness. In fact, he would sometimes say to his sons:—

"Don't lose your property; remember, I have none to leave you."

Camusot, in whom he recognized a certain likeness to his own nature, and whom he liked enough to make a sharer in his secret pleasures, alone knew of the thirty thousand a year annuity. But Camusot approved of the old man's ethics, and thought that, having made the happiness of his children and nobly fulfilled his duty by them, he now had a right to end his life jovially.

"Don't you see, my friend," said the former master of the Cocon d'Or, "I might re-marry. A young woman would give me more children. Well, Florentine does n't cost me what a wife would; neither does she bore me; and she won't give me children to lessen your property."

Camusot considered that Père Cardot gave expression to a high sense of family duty in these words; he regarded him as an admirable father-in-law.

"He knows," thought he, "how to unite the interests of his children with the pleasures which old age naturally desires after the worries of business life."

Neither the Cardots, nor the Camusots, nor the Protèz knew anything of the ways of life of their aunt Clapart. The family intercourse was restricted to the sending of notes of faire part on the occasion of deaths and marriages, and cards at the New Year. The proud Madame Clapart would never have brought herself to seek them were it not for Oscar's interests, and because of her friendship for Moreau, the only person who had been faithful to her in misfortune. She had never annoyed old Cardot by her visits, or her importunities, but she held to him as to a hope, and always went to see him once every three months and talked to him of Oscar, the nephew of the late respectable Madame Cardot; and she took the boy to call upon him three times during each vacation. At each of

these visits the old gentleman had given Oscar a dinner at the Cadran-Bleu, taking him, afterwards, to the Gaieté, and returning him safely to the rue de la Cerisaie. On one occasion, having given the boy an entirely new suit of clothes, he added the silver cup and fork and spoon required for his school outfit.

Oscar's mother endeavored to impress the old gentleman with the idea that his nephew cherished him, and she constantly referred to the cup and the fork and spoon and to the beautiful suit of clothes, though nothing was then left of the latter but the waistcoat. But such little arts did Oscar more harm than good when practised on so sly an old fox as uncle Cardot. The latter had never much liked his departed wife, a tall, spare, red-haired woman; he was also aware of the circumstances of the late Husson's marriage with Oscar's mother, and without in the least condemning her, he knew very well that Oscar was a posthumous child. His nephew, therefore, seemed to him to have no claims on the Cardot family. But Madame Clapart, like all women who concentrate their whole being into the sentiment of motherhood, did not put herself in Cardot's place and see the matter from his point of view; she thought he must certainly be interested in so sweet a child, who bore the maiden name of his late wife.

"Monsieur," said old Cardot's maid-servant, coming

out to him as he walked about the garden while awaiting his breakfast, after his hairdresser had duly shaved him and powdered his queue, "the mother of your nephew, Oscar, is here."

"Good-day, fair lady," said the old man, bowing to Madame Clapart, and wrapping his white piqué dressing-gown about him. "Hey, hey! how this little fellow grows," he added, taking Oscar by the ear.

"He has finished school, and he regretted so much that his dear uncle was not present at the distribution of the Henri IV. prizes, at which he was named. The name of Husson, which, let us hope, he will bear worthily, was proclaimed—"

"The deuce it was!" exclaimed the little old man, stopping short. Madame Clapart, Oscar, and he were walking along a terrace flanked by oranges, myrtles, and pomegranates. "And what did he get?"

"The fourth rank in philosophy," replied the mother, proudly.

"Oh! oh!" cried uncle Cardot, "the rascal has a good deal to do to make up for lost time; for the fourth rank in philosophy, well, it isn't Peru, you know! You will stay and breakfast with me?" he added.

"We are at your orders," replied Madame Clapart.

"Ah! my dear Monsieur Cardot, what happiness it is
for fathers and mothers when their children make a

good start in life! In this respect — indeed, in all others," she added, catching herself up, "you are one of the most fortunate fathers I have ever known. Under your virtuous son-in-law and your amiable daughter, the Cocon d'Or continues to be the greatest establishment of its kind in Paris. And here's your eldest son, for the last ten years at the head of a fine practice and married to wealth. And you have such charming little granddaughters! You are, as it were, the head of four great families. Leave us, Oscar; go and look at the garden, but don't touch the flowers."

"Why, he's eighteen years old!" said uncle Cardot, smiling at this injunction, which made an infant of Oscar.

"Alas, yes, he is eighteen, my good Monsieur Cardot; and after bringing him so far, sound and healthy in mind and body, neither bow-legged nor crooked, after sacrificing everything to give him an education, it would be hard if I could not see him on the road to fortune."

"That Monsieur Moreau who got him the scholarship will be sure to look after his career," said uncle Cardot, concealing his hypocrisy under an air of friendly good-humor.

"Monsieur Moreau may die," she said. "And besides, he has quarrelled irrevocably with the Comte de Sérizy, his patron."

"The deuce he has! Listen, madame; I see you are about to—"

"No, monsieur," said Oscar's mother, interrupting the old man, who, out of courtesy to the "fair lady," repressed his annoyance at being interrupted. "Alas, you do not know the miseries of a mother who, for seven years past, has been forced to take a sum of six hundred francs a year for her son's education from the miserable eighteen hundred francs of her husband's salary. Yes, monsieur, that is all we have had to live upon. Therefore, what more can I do for my poor Oscar? Monsieur Clapart so hates the child that it is impossible for me to keep him in the house. A poor woman, alone in the world, am I not right to come and consult the only relation my Oscar has under heaven?"

"Yes, you are right," said uncle Cardot. "You never told me of all this before."

"Ah, monsieur!" replied Madame Clapart, proudly, "you were the last to whom I would have told my wretchedness. It is all my own fault; I married a man whose incapacity is almost beyond belief. Yes, I am, indeed, most unhappy."

"Listen to me, madame," said the little old man, "and don't weep; it is most painful to me to see a fair lady cry. After all, your son bears the name of Husson, and if my dear deceased wife were living she

would wish to do something for the name of her father and of her brother —"

"She loved her brother," said Oscar's mother.

"But all my fortune is given to my children, who expect nothing from me at my death," continued the. "I have divided among them the millions that I had, because I wanted to see them happy and enjoying their wealth during my lifetime. I have nothing now except an annuity; and at my age one clings to old habits. Do you know the path on which you ought to start this young fellow?" he went on, after calling to Oscar and taking him by the arm. "Let him study law; I'll pay the costs. Put him in a lawyer's office and let him learn the business of pettifogging; if he does well, if he distinguishes himself, if he likes his profession and I am still alive, each of my children shall, when the proper time comes, lend him a quarter of the cost of a practice; and I will be security for him. You will only have to feed and clothe him. Of course he'll sow a few wild oats, but he'll learn life. Look at me: I left Lyon with two double louis which my grandmother gave me, and walked to Paris; and what am I now? Fasting is good for the health. Discretion, honesty, and work, young man, and you'll succeed. There's a great deal of pleasure in earning one's fortune; and if a man keeps his teeth he eats what he likes in his old age, and

sings, as I do, 'La Mère Godichon.' Remember my words: Honesty, work, discretion."

"Do you hear that, Oscar?" said his mother. "Your uncle sums up in three words all that I have been saying to you. You ought to carve the last word in letters of fire on your memory."

"Oh, I have," said Oscar.

"Very good, — then thank your uncle; didn't you hear him say he would take charge of your future? You will be a lawyer in Paris."

"He does n't see the grandeur of his destiny," said the little old man, observing Oscar's apathetic air. "Well, he's just out of school. Listen, I'm no talker," he continued; "but I have this to say: Remember that at your age honesty and uprightness are maintained only by resisting temptations; of which, in a great city like Paris, there are many at every step. Live in your mother's home, in the garret; go straight to the law-school; from there to your lawyer's office; drudge night and day, and study at home. Become, by the time you are twenty-two, a second clerk; by the time you are twenty-four, head-clerk; be steady and you will win all. If, moreover, you should n't like the profession, you might enter the office of my son the notary, and eventually succeed him. Therefore, work, patience, discretion, honesty, - those are your landmarks."

"God grant that you may live thirty years longer to see your fifth child realizing all we expect from him," cried Madame Clapart, seizing uncle Cardot's hand and pressing it with a gesture that recalled her youth.

"Now come to breakfast," replied the kind old man, leading Oscar by the ear.

During the meal uncle Cardot observed his nephew without appearing to do so, and soon saw that the lad knew nothing of life.

"Send him here to me now and then," he said to Madame Clapart, as he bade her good-bye, "and I'll form him for you."

This visit calmed the anxieties of the poor mother, who had not hoped for such brilliant success. For the next fortnight she took Oscar to walk daily, and watched him tyrannically. This brought matters to the end of October. One morning as the poor household was breakfasting on a salad of herring and lettuce, with milk for a dessert, Oscar beheld with terror the formidable ex-steward, who entered the room and surprised this scene of poverty.

"We are now living in Paris — but not as we lived at Presles," said Moreau, wishing to make known to Madame Clapart the change in their relations caused by Oscar's folly. "I shall seldom be here myself; for I have gone into partnership with Père Léger and Père Margueron of Beaumont. We are speculating in land,

and we have begun by purchasing the estate of Persan. I am the head of the concern, which has a capital of a million; part of which I have borrowed on my own securities. When I find a good thing, Père Léger and I examine it; my partners have each a quarter and I a half in the profits; but I do nearly all the work, and for that reason I shall be constantly on the road. My wife lives here, in the faubourg du Roule, very plainly. When we see how the business turns out, if we risk only the profits, and if Oscar behaves himself, we may, perhaps, employ him."

"Ah! my friend, the catastrophe caused by my poor boy's heedlessness may prove to be the cause of your making a brilliant fortune; for, really and truly, you were burying your energy and your capacity at Presles."

Madame Clapart then went on to relate her visit to uncle Cardot, in order to show Moreau that neither she nor her son need any longer be a burden on him.

"We must hold Oscar in that path with an iron hand, and he will end as a barrister or a notary. But he must n't leave the track; he must go straight through with it. Ha! I know how to help you. The legal business of land-agents is quite important, and I have heard of a lawyer who has just bought what is called a titre nu; that means a practice without clients. He is

a young man, hard as an iron bar, eager for work, ferociously active. His name is Desroches. I'll offer him our business on condition that he takes Oscar as a pupil; and I'll ask him to let the boy live with him at nine hundred francs a year, of which I will pay three, so that your son will cost you only six hundred francs, without his living, in future. If the boy ever means to become a man it can only be under a discipline like that. He'll come out of that office, notary, solicitor, or barrister, as he may elect."

"Come, Oscar; thank our kind Monsieur Moreau, and don't stand there like a stone post. All young men who commit follies have not the good fortune to meet with friends who still take an interest in their career, even after they have been injured by them."

"The best way to make your peace with me," said Moreau, pressing Oscar's hand, "is to work now with steady application, and to conduct yourself in future properly."

VIII.

TRICKS AND FARCES OF THE EMBRYO LONG ROBE.

Ten days later, Oscar was taken by Moreau to Maître Desroches, solicitor, recently established in the rue de Béthisy, in a vast apartment at the end of a narrow court-yard, for which he was paying a relatively low price.

Desroches, a young man twenty-six years of age, born of poor parents, and brought up with extreme severity by a stern father, had himself known the condition in which Oscar now was. Accordingly, he felt an interest in him, but the sort of interest which alone he could take, checked by the apparent harshness that characterized him. The aspect of this gaunt young man, with a muddy skin and hair cropped like a clothes-brush, who was curt of speech and possessed a piercing eye and a gloomy vivaciousness, terrified the unhappy Oscar.

"We work here day and night," said the lawyer, from the depths of his armchair, and behind a table on which were papers, piled up like Alps. "Monsieur Moreau, we won't kill him; but he'll have to go at our pace. Monsieur Godeschal!" he called out.

Though the day was Sunday, the head-clerk appeared, pen in hand.

"Monsieur Godeschal, here's the pupil of whom I spoke to you. Monsieur Moreau takes the liveliest interest in him. He will dine with us and sleep in the small attic next to your chamber. You will allot the exact time it takes to go to the law-school and back, so that he does not lose five minutes on the way. You will see that he learns the Code and is proficient in his classes; that is to say, after he has done his work here, you will give him authors to read. In short, he is to be under your immediate direction, and I shall keep an eye on it. They want to make him what you have made yourself, a capable head-clerk, against the time when he can take such a place himself. Go with Monsieur Godeschal, my young friend; he'll show you your lodging, and you can settle down in it. Did you notice Godeschal?" continued Desroches, speaking to Moreau. "He is a fellow who, like me, has nothing. His sister Mariette, the famous danseuse, is laying up her money to buy him a practice in ten years. My clerks are young blades who have nothing but their ten fingers to rely upon. So we all, my five clerks and I, work as hard as a dozen ordinary fellows. But in ten years I'll have the finest practice in Paris. In my office, business and clients are a passion, and that's beginning to make itself felt. I took Godeschal from

Derville, where he was only just made second clerk. He gets a thousand francs a year from me, and food and lodging. But he's worth it; he is indefatigable. I love him, that fellow! He has managed to live, as I did when a clerk, on six hundred francs a year. What I care for above all is honesty, spotless integrity; and when it is practised in such poverty as that, a man's a man. For the slightest fault of that kind a clerk leaves my office."

"The lad is in a good school," thought Moreau. For two whole years Oscar lived in the rue de Béthisy, a den of pettifogging; for if ever that superannuated expression was applicable to a lawyer's office, it was so in this case. Under this supervision, both petty and able, he was kept to his regular hours and to his work with such rigidity that his life in the midst of Paris was that of a monk.

At five in the morning, in all weathers, Godeschal woke up. He went down with Oscar to the office, where they always found their master up and working. Oscar then did the errands of the office and prepared his lessons for the law-school, — and prepared them elaborately; for Godeschal, and frequently Desroches himself, pointed out to their pupil authors to be looked through and difficulties to overcome. He was not allowed to leave a single section of the Code until he had thoroughly mastered it to the satisfaction of his

chief and Godeschal, who put him through preliminary examinations more searching and longer than those of the law-school. On his return from his classes, where he was kept but a short time, he went to his work in the office; occasionally he was sent to the Palais, but always under the thumb of the rigid Godeschal, till dinner. The dinner was that of his master, - one dish of meat, one of vegetables, and a salad. The dessert consisted of a piece of Gruyère cheese. After dinner, Godeschal and Oscar returned to the office and worked till night. Once a month Oscar went to breakfast with his uncle Cardot, and he spent the Sundays with his mother. From time to time Moreau, when he came to the office about his own affairs, would take Oscar to dine in the Palais-Royal, and to some theatre in the evening. Oscar had been so snubbed by Godeschal and by Derville for his attempts at elegance that he no longer gave a thought to his clothes.

"A good clerk," Godeschal told him, "should have two black coats, one new, one old, a pair of black trousers, black stockings, and shoes. Boots cost too much. You can't have boots till you are called to the bar. A clerk should never spend more than seven hundred francs a year. Good stout shirts of strong linen are what you want. Ha! when a man starts from nothing to reach fortune, he has to keep down to bare necessities. Look at Monsieur Desroches; he did what we are doing, and see where he is now."

Godeschal preached by example. If he professed the strictest principles of honor, discretion, and honesty, he practised them without assumption, as he walked, as he breathed; such action was the natural play of his soul, as walking and breathing were the natural play of his organs. Eighteen months after Oscar's installation into the office, the second clerk was, for the second time, slightly wrong in his accounts, which were comparatively unimportant. Godeschal said to him in presence of all the other clerks:

"My dear Gaudet, go away from here of your own free will, that it may not be said that Monsieur Desroches has dismissed you. You have been careless or absent-minded, and neither of those defects can pass here. The master shall know nothing about the matter; that is all that I can do for a comrade."

At twenty years of age, Oscar became third clerk in the office. Though he earned no salary, he was lodged and fed, for he did the work of the second clerk. Desroches employed two chief clerks, and the work of the second was unremitting toil. By the end of his second year in the law-school Oscar knew more than most licensed graduates; he did the work at the Palais intelligently, and argued some cases in chambers. Godeschal and Derville were satisfied with him. And yet, though he now seemed a sensible man, he showed, from time to time, a hankering after pleasure

and a desire to shine, repressed, though it was, by the stern discipline and continual toil of his life.

Moreau, satisfied with Oscar's progress, relaxed, in some degree, his watchfulness; and when, in July, 1825, Oscar passed his examinations with a spotless record, the land-agent gave him the money to dress himself elegantly. Madame Clapart, proud and happy in her son, prepared the outfit splendidly for the rising lawyer.

In the month of November, when the courts reopened, Oscar Husson occupied the chamber of the second clerk, whose work he now did wholly. He had a salary of eight hundred francs with board and lodging. Consequently, uncle Cardot, who went privately to Desroches and made inquiries about his nephew, promised Madame Clapart to be on the lookout for a practice for Oscar, if he continued to do as well in the future.

In spite of these virtuous appearances, Oscar Husson was undergoing a great strife in his inmost being. At times he thought of quitting a life so directly against his tastes and his nature. He felt that galley-slaves were happier than he. Galled by the collar of this iron system, wild desires seized him to fly when he compared himself in the street with the well-dressed young men whom he met. Sometimes he was driven by a sort of madness towards women; then, again, he resigned himself, but only to fall into a deeper disgust for life.

Impelled by the example of Godeschal, he was forced, rather than led of himself, to remain in that rugged way.

Godeschal, who watched and took note of Oscar. made it a matter of principle not to allow his pupil to be exposed to temptation. Generally the young clerk was without money, or had so little that he could not, if he would, give way to excesses. During the last year, the worthy Godeschal had made five or six parties of pleasure with Oscar, defraying the expenses, for he felt that the rope by which he tethered the young kid must be slackened. These "pranks," as he called them, helped Oscar to endure existence, for there was little amusement in breakfasting with his uncle Cardot, and still less in going to see his mother, who lived even more penuriously than Desroches. Moreau could not make himself familiar with Oscar as Godeschal could; and perhaps that sincere friend to young Husson was behind Godeschal in these efforts to initiate the poor youth safely into the mysteries of life. Oscar, grown prudent, had come, through contact with others, to see the extent and the character of the fault he had committed on that luckless journey; but the volume of his repressed fancies and the follies of youth might still get the better of him. Nevertheless, the more knowledge he could get of the world and its laws, the better his mind would form itself, and, provided Godeschal never lost sight of him, Moreau flattered himself that between them they could bring the son of Madame Clapart through in safety.

"How is he getting on?" asked the land-agent of Godeschal on his return from one of his journeys which had kept him some months out of Paris.

"Always too much vanity," replied Godeschal. "You give him fine clothes and fine linen, he wears the shirt-fronts of a stockbroker, and so my dainty coxcomb spends his Sundays in the Tuileries, looking out for adventures. What else can you expect? That's youth. He torments me to present him to my sister, where he would see a pretty sort of society!—actresses, ballet-dancers, elegant young fops, spendthrifts who are wasting their fortunes! His mind, I'm afraid, is not fitted for law. He can talk well, though; and if we could make him a barrister he might plead cases that were carefully prepared for him."

In the month of November, 1825, soon after Oscar Husson had taken possession of his new clerkship, and at the moment when he was about to pass his examination for the licentiate's degree, a new clerk arrived to take the place made vacant by Oscar's promotion.

This fourth clerk, named Frédéric Marest, intended to enter the magistracy, and was now in his third year at the law school. He was a fine young man of twentythree, enriched to the amount of some twelve thousand francs a year by the death of a bachelor uncle, and the son of Madame Marest, widow of a wealthy woodmerchant. This future magistrate, actuated by a laudable desire to understand his vocation in its smallest details, had put himself in Desroches' office for the purpose of studying legal procedure, and of training himself to take a place as head-clerk in two years. He hoped to do his stage (the period between the admission as licentiate and the call to the bar) in Paris, in order to be fully prepared for the functions of a post which would surely not be refused to a rich young man. To see himself, by the time he was thirty, procureur du roi in any court, no matter where, was his sole ambition. Though Frédéric Marest was cousin-german to Georges Marest, the latter not having told his surname in Pierrotin's coucou, Oscar Husson did not connect the present Marest with the grandson of Czerni-Georges.

"Messieurs," said Godeschal at breakfast time, addressing all the clerks, "I announce to you the arrival of a new jurisconsult; and as he is rich, richissime, we will make him, I hope, pay a glorious entrance-fee."

"Forward, the book!" cried Oscar, nodding to the youngest clerk, "and pray let us be serious."

The youngest clerk climbed like a squirrel along the

shelves which lined the room, until he could reach a register placed on the top shelf, where a thick layer of dust had settled on it.

"It is getting colored," said the little clerk, exhibiting the volume.

We must explain the perennial joke of this book, then much in vogue in legal offices. In a clerical life where work is the rule, amusement is all the more treasured because it is rare; but, above all, a hoax or a practical joke is enjoyed with delight. This fancy or custom does, to a certain extent, explain George Marest's behavior in the coucou. The gravest and most gloomy clerk is possessed, at times, with a craving for fun and quizzing. The instinct with which a set of young clerks will seize and develop a hoax or a practical joke is really marvellous. It has no counterpart except among painters. The denizens of a studio and of a lawyer's office are, in this line, superior to comedians.

In buying a practice without clients, Desroches began, as it were, a new dynasty. This circumstance made a break in the usages relative to the reception of new-comers. Moreover, Desroches having taken an office where legal documents had never yet been scribbled, had bought new tables, and white boxes edged with blue, also new. His staff was made up of clerks coming from other offices, without mutual ties, and sur-

prised, as one may say, to find themselves together. Godeschal, who had served his apprenticeship under Maître Derville, was not the sort of clerk to allow the precious tradition of the "welcome" to be lost. This "welcome" is a breakfast which every neophyte must give to the "ancients" of the office into which he enters.

Now, about the time when Oscar came to the office, during the first six months of Desroches' installation, on a winter evening when the work had been got through more quickly than usual, and the clerks were warming themselves before the fire preparatory to departure, it came into Godeschal's head to construct and compose a Register architriclino-basochien, of the utmost antiquity, saved from the fires of the Revolution, and derived through the procureur of the Châtelet-Bordin, the immediate predecessor of Sauvaguest, the attorney, from whom Desroches had bought his prac-The work, which was highly approved by the other clerks, was begun by a search through all the dealers in old paper for a register, made of paper with the mark of the eighteenth century, duly bound in parchment, on which should be the stamp of an order in council. Having found such a volume it was left about in the dust, on the stove, on the ground, in the kitchen, and even in what the clerks called the "chamber of deliberations;" and thus it obtained a mouldiness to delight an antiquary, cracks of aged dilapidation, and broken corners that looked as though the rats had gnawed them; also, the gilt edges were tarnished with surprising perfection. As soon as the book was duly prepared, the entries were made. The following extracts will show to the most obtuse mind the purpose to which the office of Maître Desroches devoted this register, the first sixty pages of which were filled with reports of fictitious cases. On the first page appeared as follows, in the legal spelling of the eighteenth century:—

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so be it. This day, the feast of the our lady Saincte-Geneviesve, patron saint of Paris, under whose protection have existed, since the year 1525 the clerks of this Practice, we the undersigned, clerks and sub-clerks of Maistre Jerosme-Sébastien Bordin, successor to the late Guerbet, in his lifetime procureur at the Chastelet, do hereby recognize the obligation under which we lie to renew and continue the register and the archives of installation of the clerks of this puble Practice. a glorious member of the Kingdom of Basoche, the which register, being now full in consequence of the many acts and deeds of our well-beloved predecessors, we have consigned to the Keeper of the Archives of the Palais for safekeeping, with the registers of other ancient Practices; and we have ourselves gone, each and all, to hear mass at the parish church of Saint-Severin to solemnize the inauguration of this our new register.

In witness whereof we have hereunto signed our names: Malin, head-clerk; Grévin, second-clerk; Athanase

FERET, clerk; JACQUES HUET, clerk; REGNAULT DE SAINT-JEAN-D'ANGELY, clerk; BEDEAU, youngest clerk and gutterjumper.

In the year of our Lord 1787.

After the mass aforesaid was heard, we conveyed ourselves to Courtille, where, at the common charge, we ordered a fine breakfast; which did not end till seven o'clock the next morning.

This was marvellously well engrossed. An expert would have said that it was written in the eighteenth century. Twenty-seven reports of receptions of neophytes followed, the last in the fatal year of 1792. Then came a blank of fourteen years; after which the register began again, in 1806, with the appointment of Bordin as attorney before the first Court of the Seine. And here follows the deed which proclaimed the reconstitution of the kingdom of Basoche:—

God in his mercy willed that, in spite of the fearful storms which have cruelly ravaged the land of France, now become a great Empire, the archives of the very celebrated Practice of Maître Bordin should be preserved; and we, the undersigned, clerks of the very virtuous and very worthy Maître Bordin, do not hesitate to attribute this unheard-of preservation, when all titles, privileges, and charters were lost, to the protection of Sainte-Geneviève, patron Saint of this office, and also to the reverence which the last of the procureurs of noble race had for all that belonged to ancient usages and customs. In the uncertainty of knowing the exact part of Sainte-Geneviève and Maître Bordin

in this miracle, we have resolved, each of us, to go to Saint-Étienne du Mont and there hear mass, which will be said before the altar of that Holy-Shepherdess who sends us sheep to shear, and also to offer a breakfast to our master Bordin, hoping that he will pay the costs.

Signed: Olgnard, first clerk; Poldevin, second clerk; Proust, clerk; Derville, clerk; Augustin Coret, subclerk.

At the office.

November, 1806.

At three in the afternoon, the above-named clerks hereby return their grateful thanks to their excellent master, who regaled them at the establishment of the Sieur Rolland, restaurateur, rue du Hasard, with exquisite wines of three regions, to wit: Bordeaux, Champagne, and Burgundy, also with dishes most carefully chosen, between the hours of four in the afternoon to half-past seven in the evening. Coffee, ices, and liqueurs were in abundance. But the presence of the master himself forbade the chanting of hymns of praise in clerical stanzas. No clerk exceeded the bounds of amiable gayety, for the worthy, respectable, and generous patron had promised to take his clerks to see Talma in "Britannicus," at the Théâtre-Français. Long life to Maitre Bordin! May God shed favors on his venerable pow! May he sell dear so glorious a practice! May the rich clients for whom he prays arrive! May his bills of costs and charges be paid in a trice! May our masters to come be like him! May he ever be loved by clerks in other worlds than this!

Here followed thirty-three reports of various receptions of new clerks, distinguished from one another by

different writing and different inks, also by quotations, signatures, and praises of good cheer and wines, which seemed to show that each report was written and signed on the spot, *inter pocula*.

Finally, under date of the month of June, 1822, the period when Desroches took the oath, appears this constitutional declaration:—

I, the undersigned, François-Claude-Marie Godeschal, called by Maître Desroches to perform the difficult functions of head-clerk in a Practice where the clients have to be created, having learned through Maître Derville, from whose office I come, of the existence of the famous archives architriclino-basochien, so celebrated at the Palais, have implored our gracious master to obtain them from his predecessor; for it has become of the highest importance to recover a document bearing date of the year 1786, which is connected with other documents deposited for safe-keeping at the Palais, the existence of which has been certified to by Messrs. Terrasse and Duclos, keepers of records, by the help of which we may go back to the year 1525, and find historical indications of the utmost value on the manners, customs, and cookery of the clerical race.

Having received a favorable answer to this request, the present office has this day been put in possession of these proofs of the worship in which our predecessors held the Goddess Bottle and good living.

In consequence thereof, for the edification of our successors, and to renew the chain of years and goblets, I, the said Godeschal, have invited Messieurs Doublet, second clerk; Vassal, third clerk; Hérisson and Grandemain, clerks;

and Dumets, sub-clerk, to breakfast, Sunday next, at the "Cheval Rouge," on the Quai Saint-Bernard, where we will celebrate the victory of obtaining this volume which contains the Charter of our gullets.

This day, Sunday, June 27th, were imbibed twelve bottles of twelve different wines, regarded as exquisite; also were devoured melons, pâtés au jus romanum, and a fillet of beef with mushroom sauce. Mademoiselle Mariette, the illustrious sister of our head-clerk and leading lady of the Royal Academy of music and dancing, having obligingly put at the disposition of this Practice orchestra seats for the performance of this evening, it is proper to make this record of her generosity. Moreover, it is hereby decreed that the aforesaid clerks shall convey themselves in a body to that noble demoiselle to thank her in person and declare to her that on the occasion of her first lawsuit, if the devil sends her one, she shall pay the money laid out upon it, and no more.

And our head-clerk Godeschal has been and is hereby proclaimed a flower of Basoche, and, more especially, a good fellow. May a man who treats so well be soon in treaty for a Practice of his own!

On this record were stains of wine, pâtés, and candlegrease. To exhibit the stamp of truth that the writers had managed to put upon these records, we may here give the report of Oscar's own pretended reception:—

This day, Monday, November 25th, 1822, after a session held yesterday in the rue de la Cerisaie, Arsenal quarter, at the house of Madame Clapart, mother of the candidatebasochien Oscar Husson, we, the undersigned, declare that the repast of admission surpassed our expectations. It was composed of radishes, pink and black, gherkins, anchovies, butter and olives for hors-d'œuvre; a succulent soup of rice, bearing testimony to maternal solicitude, for we recognized therein a delicious taste of poultry; indeed, by acknowledgment of the new member, we learned that the giblets of a fine stew prepared by the hands of Madame Clapart herself had been judiciously inserted into the family soup-pot with a care that is never taken except in such households.

Item: the said giblets inclosed in a sea of jelly.

Item: a tongue of beef with tomatoes, which rendered us all tongue-tied automatoes.

Item: a compote of pigeons which caused us to think the angels had had a finger in it.

Item: a timbale of macaroni surrounded by chocolate custards.

Item: a dessert composed of eleven delicate dishes, among which we remarked (in spite of the tipsiness caused by sixteen bottles of the choicest wines) a compote of peaches of august and mirobolant delicacy.

The wines of Roussillon and those of the banks of the Rhone completely effaced those of Champagne and Burgundy. A bottle of maraschino and another of kirsch did, in spite of the exquisite coffee, plunge us into so marked an cenological ecstasy that we found ourselves at a late hour in the Bois de Boulogne instead of our domiciles, where we thought we were.

In the statutes of our Order there is one rule which is rigidly enforced; namely, to allow all candidates for the privileges of Basoche to limit the magnificence of their feast of welcome to the length of their purse; for it is publicly notorious that no one delivers himself up to The-

mis if he has a fortune, and every clerk is, alas, sternly curtailed by his parents. Consequently, we hereby record with the highest praise the liberal conduct of Madame Clapart, widow, by her first marriage, of Monsieur Husson, father of the candidate, who is worthy of the hurrahs which we gave for her at dessert.

To all of which we hereby set our hands. [Signed by all the clerks.]

Three clerks had already been deceived by the Book, and three real "receptions of welcome," were recorded on this imposing register.

The day after the arrival of each neophyte, the little sub-clerk (the errand-boy and "gutter-jumper") laid upon the new-comer's desk the "Archives Architriclino Basochiennes," and the clerks enjoyed the sight of his countenance as he studied its facetious pages. *Inter pocula* each candidate had learned the secret of the farce, and the revelation inspired him with the desire to hoax his successor.

We now see why Oscar, become in his turn participator in the hoax, called out to the little clerk, "Forward, the book!"

Ten minutes later a handsome young man, with a fine figure and pleasant face, presented himself, asked for Monsieur Desroches, and gave his name without hesitation to Godeschal.

"I am Frédéric Marest," he said, "and I come to take the place of third clerk."

"Monsieur Husson," said Godeschal to Oscar, "show monsieur his seat and tell him about the customs of the office."

The next day the new clerk found the register lying on his desk. He took it up, but after reading a few pages he began to laugh, said nothing to the assembled clerks, and laid the book down again.

- "Messieurs," he said, when the hour of departure came at five o'clock, "I have a cousin who is head-clerk of the notary Maître Léopold Hannequin; I will ask his advice as to what I ought to do for my welcome."
- "That looks ill," cried Godeschal, when Frédéric had gone, "he has n't the cut of a novice, that fellow!"
 - "We'll get some fun out of him yet," said Oscar.

IX.

LA MARQUISE DE LAS FLORENTINAS Y CABIROLOS.

The following day, at two o'clock, a young man entered the office, whom Oscar recognized as Georges Marest, now head-clerk of the notary Hannequin.

- "Ha! here's the friend of Ali pacha!" he exclaimed in a flippant way.
- "Hey! you here, Monsieur l'ambassadeur!" returned Georges, recollecting Oscar.
- "So you know each other?" said Godeschal, addressing Georges.
- "I should think so! We got into a scrape together," replied Georges, "about two years ago. Yes, I had to leave Crottat and go to Hannequin in consequence of that affair."
 - "What was it?" asked Godeschal.
- "Oh, nothing!" replied Georges, at a sign from Oscar. "We tried to hoax a peer of France, and he bowled us over. Ah ça! so you want to jockey my cousin, do you?"
- "We jockey no one," replied Oscar, with dignity; "there's our charter."

And he presented the famous register, pointing to a place where sentence of banishment was passed on a refractory who was stated to have been forced, for acts of dishonesty, to leave the office in 1788.

Georges laughed as he looked through the archives.

- "Well, well," he said, "my cousin and I are rich, and we'll give you a fête such as you never had before, —something to stimulate your imaginations for that register. To-morrow (Sunday) you are bidden to the Rocher de Cancale at two o'clock. Afterwards, I'll take you to spend the evening with Madame la Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos, where we shall play cards, and you'll see the élite of the women of fashion. Therefore, gentlemen of the lower courts," he added, with notarial assumption, "you will have to behave yourselves, and carry your wine like the seigneurs of the Regency."
- "Hurrah!" cried the office like one man. "Bravo! very well! vivat! Long live the Marests!"
- "What's all this about?" asked Desroches, coming out from his private office. "Ah! is that you, Georges? I know what you are after; you want to demoralize my clerks."

So saying, he withdrew to his own room, calling Oscar after him.

"Here," he said, opening his cash-box, "are five hundred francs. Go to the Palais, and get from the registrar a copy of the decision in Vandernesse against Vandernesse; it must be served to-night if possible. I have promised a prod of twenty francs to Simon. Wait for the copy if it is not ready. Above all, don't let yourself be fooled; for Derville is capable, in the interest of his clients, to stick a spoke in our wheel. Count Félix de Vandernesse is more powerful than his brother, our client, the ambassador. Therefore keep your eyes open, and if there's the slightest hitch come back to me at once."

Oscar departed with the full intention of distinguishing himself in this little skirmish,—the first affair entrusted to him since his installation as second clerk.

After the departure of Georges and Oscar, Godeschal sounded the new clerk to discover the joke which, as he thought, lay behind this Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos. But Frédéric, with the coolness and gravity of a king's attorney, continued his cousin's hoax, and by his way of answering, and his manner generally, he succeeded in making the office believe that the marquise might really be the widow of a Spanish grandee, to whom his cousin Georges was paying his addresses. Born in Mexico, and the daughter of Creole parents, this young and wealthy widow was noted for the easy manners and habits of the women of those climates.

"'She loves to laugh, she loves to sing, she loves

to drink like me!" he said in a low voice, quoting the well-known song of Béranger. "Georges," he added, "is very rich; he has inherited from his father (who was a widower) eighteen thousand francs a year, and with the twelve thousand which an uncle has just left to each of us, he has an income of thirty thousand. So he pays his debts, and gives up the law. He hopes to be Marquis de las Florentinas, for the young widow is marquise in her own right, and has the privilege of giving her titles to her husband."

Though the clerks were still a good deal undecided in mind as to the marquise, the double perspective of a breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale and a fashionable festivity put them into a state of joyous expectation. They reserved all points as to the Spanish lady, intending to judge her without appeal after the meeting.

The Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos was neither more nor less than Mademoiselle Agathe-Florentine Cabirolle, first danseuse at the Gaieté, with whom uncle Cardot was in the habit of singing "Mère Godichon." A year after the very reparable loss of Madame Cardot, the successful merchant encountered Florentine as she was leaving Coulon's dancing-class. Attracted by the beauty of that choregraphic flower (Florentine was then about thirteen years of age), he followed her to the rue Pastourel, where he found that the future star of the ballet was the daughter of a por-

tress. Two weeks later, the mother and daughter, established in the rue de Crussol, were enjoying a modest competence. It was to this protector of the arts — to use the consecrated phrase — that the theatre owed the brilliant danseuse. The generous Maccenas made two beings almost beside themselves with joy in the possession of mahogany furniture, hangings, carpets, and a regular kitchen; he allowed them a woman-of-all-work, and gave them two hundred and fifty francs a month for their living. Père Cardot, with his hair in "pigeon-wings," seemed like an angel, and was treated with the attention due to a benefactor. To him this was the age of gold.

For three years the warbler of "Mère Godichon" had the wise policy to keep Mademoiselle Cabirolle and her mother in this little apartment, which was only ten steps from the theatre; but he gave the girl, out of love for the choregraphic art, the great Vestris for a master. In 1820 he had the pleasure of seeing Florentine dance her first "pas" in the ballet of a melodrama entitled "The Ruins of Babylon." Florentine was then about sixteen. Shortly after this début Père Cardot became an "old screw" in the eyes of his protégée; but as he had the sense to see that a dansense at the Gaieté had a certain rank to maintain, he raised the monthly stipend to five hundred francs, for which, although he did not again become an angel, he was, at least, a

"friend for life," a second father. This was his silver age.

From 1820 to 1823, Florentine had the experience of every danseuse of nineteen to twenty years of age. Her friends were the illustrious Mariette and Tullia, leading ladies of the Opera, Florine, and also poor Coralie, torn too early from the arts, and love, and Camusot. As old Cardot had by this time acquired five additional years, he had fallen into the indulgence of a semi-paternity, which is the way with old men towards the young talents they have trained, and which owe their successes to them. Besides, where could be have found another Florentine who knew all his habits and likings, and with whom he and his friends could sing "Mère Godichon"? So the little old man remained under a yoke that was semi-conjugal and also irresistibly strong. This was the brass age for the old fellow.

During the five years of silver and gold Père Cardot had laid by eighty thousand francs. The old gentleman, wise from experience, foresaw that by the time he was seventy Florentine would be of age, probably engaged at the Opera, and, consequently, wanting all the luxury of a theatrical star. Some days before the party mentioned by Georges, Père Cardot had spent the sum of forty-five thousand francs in fitting up for his Florentine the former apartment of the late Coralie.

In Paris there are suites of rooms as well as houses and streets which have their predestinations. Enriched with a magnificent service of plate, the *prima danseuse* of the Gaieté began to give dinners, spent three hundred francs a month on her dress, never went out except in a hired carriage, and had a maid for herself, a cook, and a little footman.

In fact, an engagement at the Opera was already in the wind. The Cocon d'Or did homage to its first master by sending its most splendid products for the gratification of Mademoiselle Cabirolle, now called Florentine. The magnificence which suddenly burst upon her apartment in the rue de Vendôme would have satisfied the most ambitious supernumerary. After being the master of the ship for seven years, Cardot now found himself towed along by a force of unlimited caprice. But the luckless old gentleman was fond of his tyrant. Florentine was to close his eyes; he meant to leave her a hundred thousand francs. The iron age had now begun.

Georges Marest, with thirty thousand francs a year, and a handsome face, courted Florentine. Every danseuse makes a point of having some young man who will take her to drive, and arrange the gay excursions into the country which all such women delight in. However disinterested she may be, the courtship of such a star is a passion which costs some trifles

to the favored mortal. There are dinners at restaurants, boxes at the theatres, carriages to go to the environs and return, choice wines consumed in profusion, - for an opera danseuse eats and drinks like an athlete. Georges amused himself like other young men who pass at a jump from paternal discipline to a rich independence, and the death of his uncle, nearly doubling his means, had still further enlarged his ideas. As long as he had only his patrimony of eighteen thousand francs a year, his intention was to become a notary, but (as his cousin remarked to the clerks of Desroches) a man must be stupid who begins a profession with the fortune most men hope to acquire in order to leave it. Wiser than Georges, Frédéric persisted in following the career of public office, and of putting himself, as we have seen, in training for it.

A young man as handsome and attractive as Georges might very well aspire to the hand of a rich creole; and the clerks in Desroches' office, all of them the sons of poor parents, having never frequented the great world, or, indeed, known anything about it, put themselves into their best clothes on the following day, impatient enough to behold, and be presented to the Mexican Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

"What luck," said Oscar to Godeschal, as they were getting up in the morning, "that I had just ordered a new coat and trousers and waistcoat, and that my dear mother had made me that fine outfit! I have six frilled shirts of fine linen in the dozen she made for me. We shall make an appearance! Ha! ha! suppose one of us were to carry off the Creole marchioness from that Georges Marest!"

"Fine occupation that, for a clerk in our office!" cried Godeschal. "Will you never control your vanity, popinjay?"

"Ah! monsieur," said Madame Clapart, who entered the room at that moment to bring her son some cravats, and overheard the last words of the head-clerk, "would to God that my Oscar might always follow your advice. It is what I tell him all the time: 'Imitate Monsieur Godeschal; listen to what he tells you.'"

"He'll go all right, madame," interposed Godeschal; "but he must n't commit any more blunders like one he was guilty of last night, or he'll lose the confidence of the master. Monsieur Derosches won't stand any one not succeeding in what he tells them to do. He ordered your son, for a first employment in his new clerkship, to get a copy of a judgment which ought to have been served last evening, and Oscar, instead of doing so, allowed himself to be fooled. The master was furious. It's a chance if I have been able to repair the mischief by going this morning, at six o'clock, to see the head-clerk at the Palais, who has promised me to have the copy ready by seven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Ah, Godeschal!" cried Oscar, going up to him and pressing his hand. "You are, indeed, a true friend."

"Ah, monsieur!" said Madame Clapart, "a mother is happy, indeed, in knowing that her son has a friend like you; you may rely upon a gratitude which can end only with my life. Oscar, one thing I want to say to you now. Distrust that Georges Marest. I wish you had never met him again, for he was the cause of your first great misfortune in life."

"Was he? How so?" asked Godeschal.

The too devoted mother explained succinctly the adventure of her poor Oscar in Pierrotin's coucou.

"I am certain," said Godeschal, "that that blagueur is preparing some trick against us for this evening. As for me, I can't go to the Marquise de las Florintinas' party, for my sister wants me to draw up the terms of her new engagement; I shall have to leave after the dessert. But, Oscar, be on your guard. They will ask you to play, and, of course, the Desroches office must n't draw back; but be careful. You shall play for both of us; here's a hundred francs," said the good fellow, knowing that Oscar's purse was dry from the demands of his tailor and bootmaker. "Be prudent; remember not to play beyond that sum; and don't let yourself get tipsy, either with play or libations. Saperlotte! a second clerk is already a man of weight, and should n't gamble on notes, or go

beyond a certain limit in anything. His business is to get himself admitted to the bar. Therefore don't drink too much, don't play too long, and maintain a proper dignity, — that's your rule of conduct. Above all, get home by midnight; for, remember, you must be at the Palais to-morrow morning by seven to get that judgment. A man is not forbidden to amuse himself, but business first, my boy."

"Do you hear that, Oscar?" said Madame Clapart.
"Monsieur Godeschal is indulgent; see how well he knows how to combine the pleasures of youth and the duties of his calling."

Madame Clapart, on the arrival of the tailor and the bootmaker with Oscar's new clothes, remained alone with Godeschal, in order to return him the hundred francs he had just given her son.

"Ah, monsieur!" she said, "the blessings of a mother will follow you wherever you go, and in all your enterprises."

Poor woman! she now had the supreme delight of seeing her son well-dressed, and she gave him a gold watch, the price of which she had saved by economy, as the reward of his good conduct.

"You draw for the conscription next week," she said, "and to prepare, in case you get a bad number, I have been to see your uncle Cardot. He is very much pleased with you; and so delighted to know you are a

second clerk at twenty, and to hear of your successful examination at the law-school, that he promised me the money for a substitute. Are not you glad to think that your own good conduct has brought such reward? Though you have some privations to bear, remember the happiness of being able, five years from now, to buy a practice. And think, too, my dear little kitten, how happy you make your mother."

Oscar's face, somewhat thinned by study, had acquired, through habits of business, a serious expression. He had reached his full growth, his beard was thriving; adolescence had given place to virility. The mother could not refrain from admiring her son and kissing him, as she said:—

"Amuse yourself, my dear boy, but remember the advice of our good Monsieur Godeschal. Ah! by the bye, I was nearly forgetting! Here's a present our friend Moreau sends you. See! what a pretty pocket-book."

"And I want it, too; for the master gave me five hundred francs to get that cursed judgment of Vandernesse versus Vandernesse, and I don't want to leave that sum of money in my room."

"But, surely, you are not going to carry it with you!" exclaimed his mother, in alarm. "Suppose you should lose a sum like that! Had n't you better give it to Monsieur Godeschal for safe keeping?"

"Godeschal!" cried Oscar, who thought his mother's suggestion excellent.

But Godeschal, who, like all clerks, had his time to himself on Sundays, from ten to two o'clock, had already departed.

When his mother left him, Oscar went to lounge upon the boulevards until it was time to go to Georges Marest's breakfast. Why not display those beautiful clothes which he wore with a pride and joy which all young fellows who have been pinched for means in their youth will remember. A pretty waistcoat with a blue ground and a palm-leaf pattern, a pair of black cassimere trousers pleated, a black coat very well fitting, and a cane with a gilt top, the cost of which he had saved himself, caused a natural joy to the poor lad, who thought of his manner of dress on the day of that journey to Presles, as the effect that Georges had then produced upon him came back to his mind.

Oscar had before him the perspective of a day of happiness; he was to see the gay world at last! Let us admit that a clerk deprived of enjoyments, though longing for dissipation, was likely to let his unchained senses drive the wise counsels of his mother and Godeschal completely out of his mind. To the shame of youth be it said that good advice is never lacking to it. In the matter of Georges, Oscar himself had a feeling of aversion for him; he felt humiliated before

a witness of that scene in the salon at Presles when Moreau had flung him at the count's feet. The moral senses have their laws, which are implacable, and we are always punished for disregarding them. There is one in particular, which the animals themselves obey without discussion, and invariably; it is that which tells us to avoid those who have once injured us, with or without intention, voluntarily or involuntarily. The creature from whom we receive either damage or annovance will always be displeasing to us. Whatever may be his rank or the degree of affection in which he stands to us, it is best to break away from him; for our evil genius has sent him to us. Though the Christian sentiment is opposed to it, obedience to this terrible law is essentially social and conservative. The daughter of James II., who seated herself upon her father's throne, must have caused him many a wound before that usurpation. Judas had certainly given some murderous blow to Jesus before he betrayed him. We have within us an inward power of sight, an eye of the soul which foresees catastrophes; and the repugnance that comes over us against the fateful being is the result of that foresight. Though religion orders us to conquer it, distrust remains, and its voice is forever heard. Would Oscar, at twenty years of age, have the wisdom to listen to it?

Alas! when, at half-past two o'clock, Oscar entered

the salon of the Rocher de Cancale, — where were three invited persons beside the clerks, to wit: an old captain of dragoons, named Giroudeau; Finot, a journalist who might procure an engagement for Florentine at the Opera, and du Bruel, an author, the friend of Tullia, one of Mariette's rivals, — the second clerk felt his secret hostility vanish at the first handshaking, the first dashes of conversation as they sat around a table luxuriously served. Georges, moreover, made himself charming to Oscar.

"You've taken to private diplomacy," he said; "for what difference is there between a lawyer and an ambassador? only that between a nation and an individual. Ambassadors are the attorneys of Peoples. If I can ever be useful to you, let me know."

"Well," said Oscar, "I'll admit to you now that you once did me a very great harm."

"Pooh!" said Georges, after listening to the explanations for which he asked; "it was Monsieur de Sérizy who behaved badly. His wife! I would n't have her at any price; neither would I like to be in the count's red skin, minister of State and peer of France as he is. He has a small mind, and I don't care a fig for him now."

Oscar listened with true pleasure to these slurs on the count, for they diminished, in a way, the importance of his fault; and he echoed the spiteful language of the

ex-notary, who amused himself by predicting the blows to the nobility of which the *bourgeoisie* were already dreaming, — blows which were destined to become a reality in 1830.

At half-past three the solid eating of the feast began; the dessert did not appear till eight o'clock, — each course having taken two hours to serve. None but clerks can eat like that! The stomachs of eighteen and twenty are inexplicable to the medical art. The wines were worthy of Borrel, who in those days had superseded the illustrious Balaine, the creator of the first restaurant for delicate and perfectly prepared food in Paris, — that is to say, the whole world.

The report of this Belshazzar's feast for the architriclino-basochien register was duly drawn up, beginning, Inter pocula aurea restauranti, qui vulgo dicitur Rupes Cancali. Every one can imagine the fine page now added to the Golden Book of jurisprudential festivals.

Godeschal disappeared after signing the report, leaving the eleven guests, stimulated by the old captain of the Imperial Guard, to the wines, toasts, and liqueurs of a dessert composed of choice and early fruits, in pyramids that rivalled the obelisk of Thebes. By halfpast ten the little sub-clerk was in such a state that Georges packed him into a coach, paid his fare, and gave the address of his mother to the driver. The

remaining ten, all as drunk as Pitt and Dundas, talked of going on foot along the boulevards, considering the fine evening, to the house of the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos, where, about midnight, they might expect to find the most brilliant society of Paris. They felt the need of breathing the pure air into their lungs; but, with the exception of Georges, Giroudeau, du Bruel, and Finot, all four accustomed to Parisian orgies, not one of the party could walk. Consequently, Georges sent to a livery-stable for three open carriages, in which he drove his company for an hour round the exterior boulevards from Montmartre to the Barrière du Trône. They returned by Bercy, the quays, and the boulevards to the rue de Vendôme.

The clerks were fluttering still in the skies of fancy to which youth is lifted by intoxication, when their amphitryon introduced them into Florentine's salon. There sparkled a bevy of stage princesses, who, having been informed, no doubt, of Frédéric's joke, were amusing themselves by imitating the women of good society. They were then engaged in eating ices. The wax-candles flamed in the candelabra. Tullia's footmen and those of Madame du Val-Noble and Florine, all in full livery, were serving the dainties on silver salvers. The hangings, a marvel of Lyonnaise workmanship, fastened by gold cords, dazzled all eyes. The flowers of the carpet were like a garden. The

richest bibelots and curiosities danced before the eyes of the new-comers.

At first, and in the state to which Georges had brought them, the clerks, and more particularly Oscar, believed in the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos. Gold glittered on four card-tables in the bedchamber. In the salon, the women were playing at vingt-et-un, kept by Nathan, the celebrated author.

After wandering, tipsy and half asleep, through the dark exterior boulevards, the clerks now felt that they had wakened in the palace of Armida. Oscar, presented to the marquise by Georges, was quite stupefied, and did not recognize the danseuse he had seen at the Gaieté, in this lady, aristocratically decolletée and swathed in laces, till she looked like the vignette of a keepsake, who received him with manners and graces the like of which was neither in the memory nor the imagination of a young clerk rigidly brought up. After admiring the splendors of the apartment and the beautiful women there displayed, who had all outdone each other in their dress for this occasion, Oscar was taken by the hand and led by Florentine to a vingtet-un table.

"Let me present you," she said, "to the beautiful Marquise d'Anglade, one of my nearest friends."

And she took poor Oscar to the pretty Fanny Beaupré, who had just made herself a reputation at the Porte-Saint-Martin, in a melodrama entitled "La Famille d'Anglade."

"My dear," said Florentine, "allow me to present to you a charming youth, whom you can take as a partner in the game."

"Ah! that will be delightful," replied the actress, smiling, as she looked at Oscar. "I am losing. Shall we go shares, monsieur?"

"Madame la marquise, I am at your orders," said Oscar, sitting down beside her.

"Put down the money; I'll play; you shall bring me luck! See, here are my last hundred francs."

And the "marquise" took out from her purse, the rings of which were adorned with diamonds, five gold pieces. Oscar pulled out his hundred in silver five-franc pieces, much ashamed at having to mingle such ignoble coins with gold. In ten throws the actress lost the two hundred francs.

"Oh! how stupid!" she cried. "I'm banker now. But we'll play together still, won't we?"

Fanny Beaupré rose to take her place as banker, and Oscar, finding himself observed by the whole table, dared not retire on the ground that he had no money. Speech failed him, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

"Lend me five hundred francs," said the actress to the danseuse.

Florentine brought the money, which she obtained from Georges, who had just passed eight times at écarté.

"Nathan has won twelve hundred francs," said the actress to Oscar. "Bankers always win; we won't let them fool us, will we?" she whispered in his ear.

Persons of nerve, imagination, and dash will understand how it was that poor Oscar opened his pocket-book and took out the note of five hundred francs which Desroches had given him. He looked at Nathan, the distinguished author, who now began, with Florine, to play a heavy game against the bank.

"Come, my little man, take 'em up," cried Fanny Beaupré, signing to Oscar to rake in the two hundred francs which Nathan and Florine had punted.

The actress did not spare taunts or jests on those who lost. She enlivened the game with jokes which Oscar thought singular; but reflection was stifled by joy; for the first two throws produced a gain of two thousand francs. Oscar then thought of feigning illness and making his escape, leaving his partner behind him; but "honor" kept him there. Three more turns and the gains were lost. Oscar felt a cold sweat running down his back, and he was sobered completely.

The two next throws carried off the thousand francs of their mutual stake. Oscar was consumed with thirst, and drank three glasses of iced punch one after the other. The actress now led him into the bed-chamber, where the rest of the company were playing, talking frivolities with an easy air. But by this time the sense of his wrong-doing overcame him; the figure of Desroches appeared to him like a vision. He turned aside to a dark corner and sat down, putting his hand-kerchief to his eyes, and wept. Florentine noticed the attitude of true grief, which, because it is sincere, is certain to strike the eye of one who acts. She ran to him, took the handkerchief from his hand, and saw his tears; then she led him into a boudoir alone.

"What is it, my child?" she said.

At the tone and accent of that voice Oscar recognized a motherly kindness which is often found in women of her kind, and he answered openly:—

"I have lost five hundred francs which my employer gave me to obtain a document to-morrow morning; there's nothing for me but to fling myself into the river; I am dishonored."

"How silly you are!" she said. "Stay where you are; I'll get you a thousand francs and you can win back what you've lost; but don't risk more than five hundred, so that you may be sure of your master's money. Georges plays a fine game at écarté; bet on him."

Oscar, frightened by his position, accepted the offer of the mistress of the house.

"Ah!" he thought, "it is only women of rank who are capable of such kindness. Beautiful, noble, rich! how lucky Georges is!"

He received the thousand francs from Florentine and returned to bet on his hoaxer. George had just passed for the fourth time when Oscar sat down by him. The other players saw with satisfaction the arrival of a new better; for all, with the instinct of gamblers, took the side of Giroudeau, the old officer of the Empire.

"Messieurs," said Georges, "you'll be punished for deserting me; I feel in the vein. Come, Oscar, we'll make an end of them!"

Georges and his partner lost five games running. After losing the thousand francs Oscar was seized with the fury of play and insisted on taking the cards himself. By the result of a chance not at all uncommon with those who play for the first time, he won. But Georges bewildered him with advice; told him when to throw the cards, and even snatched them from his hand; so that this conflict of wills and intuitions injured his vein. By three o'clock in the morning, after various changes of fortune, and still drinking punch, Oscar came down to his last hundred francs. He rose with a heavy head, completely stupefied, took a few steps forward, and fell upon a sofa in the boudoir, his eyes closing in a leaden sleep.

"Mariette," said Fanny Beaupré to Godeschal's sister, who had come in about two o'clock, "do you dine here to-morrow? Camusot and Père Cardot are coming, and we'll have some fun."

"What!" cried Florentine, "and my old fellow never told me!"

"He said he'd tell you to-morrow morning," remarked Fanny Beaupré.

"The devil take him and his orgies!" exclaimed Florentine. "He and Camusot are worse than magistrates or stage-managers. But we have very good dinners here, Mariette," she continued. "Cardot always orders them from Chevet's; bring your Duc de Maufrigneuse and we'll make them dance like Tritons."

Hearing the names of Cardot and Camusot, Oscar made an effort to throw off his sleep; but he could only mutter a few words which were not understood, and then he fell back upon the silken cushions.

"You'll have to keep him here all night," said Fanny Beaupré, laughing, to Florentine.

"Oh! poor boy! he is drunk with punch and despair both. It is the second clerk in your brother's office," she said to Mariette. "He has lost the money his master gave him for some legal affair. He wanted to drown himself; so I lent him a thousand francs, but those brigands Finot and Giroudeau won them from him. Poor innocent!"

"But we ought to wake him," said Mariette. "My brother won't make light of it, nor his master either."

"Oh, wake him if you can, and carry him off with you!" said Florentine, returning to the salon to receive the adieux of some departing guests.

Presently those who remained began what was called "character dancing," and by the time it was broad daylight, Florentine, tired out, went to bed, oblivious of Oscar, who was still in the boudoir sound asleep.

Χ.

ANOTHER CATASTROPHE.

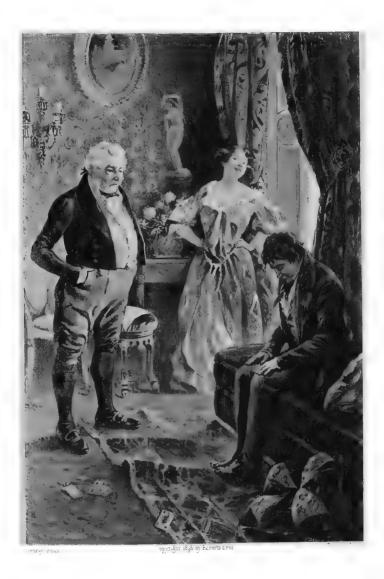
ABOUT eleven the next morning, a terrible sound awoke the unfortunate clerk. Recognizing the voice of his uncle Cardot, he thought it wise to feign sleep, and so turned his face into the yellow velvet cushions on which he had passed the night.

"Really, my little Florentine," said the old gentleman, "this is neither right nor sensible; you danced last evening in 'Les Ruines,' and you have spent the night in an orgy. That's deliberately going to work to lose your freshness. Besides which, it was ungrateful to inaugurate this beautiful apartment without even letting me know. Who knows what has been going on here?"

"Old monster!" cried Florentine, "have n't you a key that lets you in at all hours? My ball lasted till five in the morning, and you have the cruelty to come and wake me up at eleven!"

"Half-past eleven, Titine," observed Cardot, humbly. "I came out early to order a dinner fit for an archbishop at Chevet's. Just see how the carpets are stained! What sort of people did you have here?"

"'Nephew! so he's your nephew?' cried Florentine, with another burst of laughter."



"You need n't complain, for Fanny Beaupré told me you were coming to dinner with Camusot, and to please you I've invited Tullia, du Bruel, Mariette, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, Florine, and Nathan. So you'll have the four loveliest creatures ever seen behind the footlights; we'll dance you a pas de Zéphire."

"It is enough to kill you to lead such a life!" cried old Cardot; "and look at the broken glasses! What pillage! The antechamber actually makes me shudder—"

At this instant the wrathful old gentleman stopped short as if magnetized, like a bird which a snake is charming. He saw the outline of a form in a black coat through the door of the boudoir.

- "Ah, Mademoiselle Cabirolle!" he said at last.
- "Well, what?" she asked.

The eyes of the danseuse followed those of the little old man; and when she recognized the presence of the clerk she went off into such fits of laughter that not only was the old gentleman nonplussed, but Oscar was compelled to appear; for Florentine took him by the arm, still pealing with laughter at the conscience-stricken faces of the uncle and nephew.

- "You here, nephew?"
- "Nephew! so he's your nephew?" cried Florentine, with another burst of laughter. "You never told me about him. Why did n't Mariette carry you off?" she

said to Oscar, who stood there petrified. "What can he do now, poor boy?"

- "Whatever he pleases!" said Cardot, sharply, marching to the door as if to go away.
- "One moment, papa Cardot. You will be so good as to get your nephew out of a scrape into which I led him; for he played the money of his master and lost it, and I lent him a thousand francs to win it back, and he lost that too."
- "Miserable boy! you lost fifteen hundred francs at play at your age?"
- "Oh, uncle, uncle!" cried poor Oscar, plunged by these words into all the horrors of his position, and falling on his knees before his uncle, with clasped hands, "It is twelve o'clock! I am lost, dishonored! Monsieur Desroches will have no pity! He gave me the money for an important affair, in which his pride was concerned. I was to get a paper at the Palais in the case of Vandernesse versus Vandernesse! What will become of me? Oh, save me for the sake of my father and aunt! Come with me to Monsieur Desroches, and explain it to him; make some excuse, anything!"

These sentences were jerked out through sobs and tears that might have moved the sphinx of Luxor.

"Old skinflint!" said the danseuse, who was crying, "will you let your own nephew be dishonored, — the

son of the man to whom you owe your fortune? — for his name is Oscar Husson. Save him, or Titine will deny you forever!"

- "But how did he come here?" asked Cardot.
- "Don't you see that the reason he forgot to go for those papers was because he was drunk and overslept himself. Georges and his cousin Frédéric took all the clerks in his office to a feast at the Rocher de Cancale."

Père Cardot looked at Florentine and hesitated.

"Come, come," she said, "you old monkey, should n't I have hid him better if there had been anything else in it?"

"There, take your five hundred francs, you scamp!" said Cardot to his nephew, "and remember, that's the last penny you'll ever get from me. Go and make it up with your master if you can. I'll return the thousand francs which you borrowed of mademoiselle; but I'll never hear another word about you."

Oscar disappeared, not wishing to hear more. Once in the street, however, he knew not where to go.

Chance which destroys men and chance which saves them were both making equal efforts for and against Oscar during that fateful morning. But he was doomed to fall before a master who forgave no failure in any affair he had once undertaken. When Mariette reached home that night, she felt alarmed at what might happen to the youth in whom her brother took interest

and she wrote a hasty note to Godeschal, telling him what had happened to Oscar and inclosing a bank bill for five hundred francs to repair his loss. The kind-hearted creature went to sleep after charging her maid to carry the little note to Desroches' office before seven o'clock in the morning. Godeschal, on his side, getting up at six and finding that Oscar had not returned, guessed what had happened. He took the five hundred francs from his own little hoard and rushed to the Palais, where he obtained a copy of the judgment and returned in time to lay it before Desroches by eight o'clock.

Meantime Desroches, who always rose at four, was in his office by seven. Mariette's maid, not finding the brother of her mistress in his bedroom, came down to the office and there met Desroches, to whom she very naturally offered the note.

- "Is it about business?" he asked; "I am Monsieur Desroches.
 - "You can see, monsieur," replied the maid.

Desroches opened the letter and read it. Finding the five-hundred-franc note, he went into his private office furiously angry with his second clerk. About half-past seven he heard Godeschal dictating to the second head-clerk a copy of the document in question, and a few moments later the good fellow entered his master's office with triumph in his heart.

- "Did Oscar Husson fetch the paper this morning from Simon?" inquired Desroches.
 - "Yes, monsieur."
 - "Who gave him the money?"
 - "Why, you did, Saturday," replied Godeschal.
- "Then it rains five-hundred-franc notes," cried Desroches. "Look here, Godeschal, you are a fine fellow, but that little Husson does not deserve such generosity. I hate idiots, but I hate still more the men who will go wrong in spite of the fatherly care which watches over them." He gave Godeschal Mariette's letter and the five-hundred-franc note which she had sent. "You must excuse my having opened it," he said, "but your sister's maid told me it was on business. Dismiss Husson."
- "Poor unhappy boy! what grief he has caused me! said Godeschal, "that tall ne'er-do-well of a Georges Marest is his evil genius; he ought to flee him like the plague; if not, he'll bring him to some third disgrace."
 - "What do you mean by that?" asked Desroches.

Godeschal then related briefly the affair of the journey to Presles.

"Ah! yes," said the lawyer, "I remember Joseph Bridau told me that story about the time it happened. It is to that meeting that we owe the favor Monsieur de Sérizy has since shown in the matter of Joseph's brother, Philippe Bridau."

At this moment Moreau, to whom the case of the Vandernesse estate was of much importance, entered the office. The marquis wished to sell the land in parcels and the count was opposed to such a sale. The land-agent received therefore the first fire of Desroches' wrath against his ex-second clerk and all the threatening prophecies which he fulminated against him. The result was that this most sincere friend and protector of the unhappy youth came to the conclusion that his vanity was incorrigible.

"Make him a barrister," said Desroches. "He has only his last examination to pass. In that line, his defects might prove virtues, for self-love and vanity give tongues to half the attorneys."

At this time Clapart, who was ill, was being nursed by his wife, — a painful task, a duty without reward. The sick man tormented the poor creature, who was now doomed to learn what venomous and spiteful teasing a half-imbecile man, whom poverty had rendered craftily savage, could be capable of in the weary têteà-tête of each endless day. Delighted to turn a sharpened arrow in the sensitive heart of the mother, he had, in a measure, studied the fears that Oscar's behavior and defects inspired in the poor woman. When a mother receives from her child a shock like that of the affair at Presles, she continues in a state of constant fear, and, by the manner in which his wife

boasted of Oscar every time he obtained the slightest success, Clapart knew the extent of her secret uneasiness, and he took pains to arouse it on every occasion.

"Well, Madame," Clapart would say, "Oscar is doing better than I even hoped. That journey to Presles was only a heedlessness of youth. Where can you find young lads who do not commit just such faults? Poor child! he bears his privations heroically! If his father had lived, he would never have had any. God grant he may know how to control his passions!" etc., etc.

While all these catastrophes were happening in the rue de Vendôme and the rue de Béthisy, Clapart, sitting in the chimney corner, wrapped in an old dressinggown, watched his wife, who was engaged over the fire in their bedroom in simultaneously making the family broth, Clapart's tisane, and her own breakfast.

"Mon Dieu! I wish I knew how the affair of yesterday ended. Oscar was to breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale and spend the evening with a marquise—"

"Don't trouble yourself! Sooner or later you'll find out about your swan," said her husband. "Do you really believe in that marquise? Pooh! A young man who has senses and a taste for extravagance like Oscar can find such ladies as that on every bush—if he pays for them. Some fine morning you'll find yourself with a load of debt on your back."

"You are always trying to put me in despair!" cried Madame Clapart. "You complained that my son lived on your salary, and never has he cost you a penny. For two years you haven't had the slightest cause of complaint against him; here he is second clerk, his uncle and Monsieur Moreau pay all expenses, and he earns, himself, a salary of eight hundred francs. If we have bread to eat in our old age we may owe it all to that dear boy. You are really too unjust—"

"You call my foresight unjust, do you?" replied the invalid, crossly.

Just then the bell rang loudly. Madame Clapart ran to open the door, and remained in the outer room with Moreau, who had come to soften the blow which Oscar's new folly would deal to the heart of his poor mother.

"What! he gambled with the money of the office?" she cried, bursting into tears.

"Didn't I tell you so, hey?" said Clapart, appearing like a spectre at the door of the salon whither his curiosity had brought him.

"Oh! what shall we do with him?" said Madame Clapart, whose grief made her impervious to Clapart's taunt.

"If he bore my name," replied Moreau, "I should wait composedly till he draws for the conscription, and

if he gets a fatal number I should not provide him with a substitute. This is the second time your son has committed a folly out of sheer vanity. Well, vanity may inspire fine deeds in war and may advance him in the career of a soldier. Besides, six years of military service will put some lead into his head; and as he has only his last legal examination to pass, it won't be much ill-luck for him if he does n't become a lawyer till he is twenty-six; that is, if he wants to continue in the law after paying, as they say, his tax of blood. By that time, at any rate, he will have been severely punished, he will have learned experience, and contracted habits of subordination. Before making his probation at the bar he will have gone through his probation in life."

"If that is your decision for a son," said Madame Clapart, "I see that the heart of a father is not like that of a mother. My poor Oscar a common soldier!—"

"Would you rather that he flung himself headforemost into the Seine after committing a dishonorable action? He cannot now become a solicitor; do
you think him steady and wise enough to be a barrister? No. While his reason is maturing, what will he
become? A dissipated fellow. The discipline of the
army will, at least, preserve him from that."

"Could he not go into some other office? His uncle

Cardot has promised to pay for his substitute; Oscar is to dedicate his graduating thesis to him."

At this moment carriage-wheels were heard, and a hackney-coach containing Oscar and all his worldly belongings stopped before the door. The luckless young man came up at once.

"Ah! here you are, Monsieur Joli-Cœur!" cried Clapart.

Oscar kissed his mother, and held out to Moreau a hand which the latter refused to take. To this rebuff Oscar replied by a reproachful look, the boldness of which he had never shown before. Then he turned on Clapart.

"Listen to me, monsieur," said the youth, transformed into a man. "You worry my poor mother devilishly, and that's your right, for she is, unfortunately, your wife. But as for me, it is another thing. I shall be of age in a few months; and you have no rights over me even as a minor. I have never asked anything of you. Thanks to Monsieur Moreau, I have never cost you one penny, and I owe you no gratitude. Therefore, I say, let me alone!"

Clapart, hearing this apostrophe, slunk back to his sofa in the chimney corner. The reasoning and the inward fury of the young man, who had just received a lecture from his friend Godeschal, silenced the imbecile mind of the sick man.

"A momentary temptation, such as you yourself would have yielded to at my age," said Oscar to Moreau, "has made me commit a fault which Desroches thinks serious, though it is only a peccadillo. I am more provoked with myself for taking Florentine of the Gaieté for a marquise than I am for losing fifteen hundred francs after a little debauch in which everybody, even Godeschal, was half-seas over. This time, at any rate, I've hurt no one but myself. I'm cured of such things forever. If you are willing to help me, Monsieur Moreau, I swear to you that the six years I must still stay a clerk before I can get a practice shall be spent without—"

"Stop there!" said Moreau. "I have three children, and I can make no promises."

"Never mind, never mind," said Madame Clapart to her son, casting a reproachful glance at Moreau. "Your uncle Cardot —"

"I have no longer an uncle Cardot," replied Oscar, who related the scene in the rue de Vendôme.

Madame Clapart, feeling her legs give way under the weight of her body, staggered to a chair in the diningroom, where she fell as if struck by lightning.

"All the miseries together!" she said, as she fainted.

Moreau took the poor mother in his arms, and carried her to the bed in her chamber. Oscar remained motionless, as if crushed.

"There is nothing left for you," said Moreau, coming back to him, "but to make yourself a soldier. That idiot of a Clapart looks to me as though he could n't live three months, and then your mother will be without a penny. Ought I not, therefore, to reserve for her the little money I am able to give? It was impossible to tell you this before her. As a soldier, you'll eat plain bread and reflect on life such as it is to those who are born into it without fortune."

"I may get a lucky number," said Oscar.

"Suppose you do, what then? Your mother has well fulfilled her duty toward you. She gave you an education; she placed you on the right road, and secured you a career. You have left it. Now, what can you do? Without money, nothing; as you know by this time. You are not a man who can begin a new career by taking off your coat and going to work in your shirt-sleeves with the tools of an artisan. Besides, your mother loves you, and she would die to see you come to that."

Oscar sat down and no longer restrained his tears, which flowed copiously. At last he understood this language, so completely unintelligible to him ever since his first fault.

"Men without means ought to be perfect," added Moreau, not suspecting the profundity of that cruel sentence.

"My fate will soon be decided," said Oscar. "I draw my number the day after to-morrow. Between now and then I will decide upon my future."

Moreau, deeply distressed in spite of his stern bearing, left the household in the rue de la Cerisaie to its despair.

Three days later Oscar drew the number twenty-seven. In the interests of the poor lad the former steward of Presles had the courage to go to the Comte de Sérizy and ask for his influence to get Oscar into the cavalry. It happened that the count's son, having left the Ecole Polytechnique rather low in his class, was appointed, as a favor, sub-lieutenant in a regiment of cavalry commanded by the Duc de Maufrigneuse. Oscar had, therefore, in his great misfortune, the small luck of being, at the Comte de Sérizy's instigation, drafted into that noble regiment, with the promise of promotion to quartermaster within a year. Chance had thus placed the ex-clerk under the command of the son of the Comte de Sérizy.

Madame Clapart, after languishing for some days, so keenly was she affected by these catastrophes, became a victim to the remorse which seizes upon many a mother whose conduct has been frail in her youth, and who, in her old age, turns to repentance. She now considered herself under a curse. She attributed the sorrows of her second marriage and the misfortunes

of her son to a just retribution by which God was compelling her to expiate the errors and pleasures of her vonth. This opinion soon became a certainty to her The poor woman went, for the first time in forty years, to confess herself to the Abbé Gaudron, vicar of Saint-Paul's, who led her into the practice of devotion. But so ill-used and loving a soul as that of Madame Clapart could never be anything but simply The Aspasia of the Directory wanted to expiate her sins in order to draw down the blessing of God on the head of her poor Oscar, and she henceforth vowed herself to works and deeds of the purest piety. She believed she had won the attention of heaven when she saved the life of Monsieur Clapart, who, thanks to her devotion, lived on to torture her; but she chose to see, in the tyranny of that imbecile mind, a trial inflicted by the hand of one who loveth while he chasteneth.

Oscar, meantime, behaved so well that in 1830 he was first sergeant of the company of the Vicomte de Sérizy, which gave him the rank of sub-lieutenant of the line. Oscar Husson was by that time twenty-five years old. As the Royal Guard, to which his regiment was attached, was always in garrison in Paris, or within a circumference of thirty miles around the capital, he came to see his mother from time to time, and tell her his griefs; for he had the sense to see that he could never become an officer as matters then were.

At that time the cavalry grades were all being taken up by the younger sons of noble families, and men without the article to their names found promotion difficult. Oscar's sole ambition was to leave the Guards and be appointed sub-lieutenant in a regiment of the cavalry of the line. In the month of February, 1830, Madame Clapart obtained this promotion for her son through the influence of Madame la Dauphine, granted to the Abbé Gaudron, now rector of Saint-Paul's.

Although Oscar outwardly professed to be devoted to the Bourbons, in the depths of his heart he was a Therefore, in the struggle of 1830, he went over to the side of the people. This desertion, which had an importance due to the crisis in which it took place, brought him before the eyes of the public. During the excitement of triumph in the month of August he was promoted lieutenant, received the cross of the Legion of honor, and was attached as aide-decamp to La Fayette, who gave him the rank of captain in 1832. When the amateur of the best of all possible republics was removed from the command of the National guard, Oscar Husson, whose devotion to the new dynasty amounted to fanaticism, was appointed. major of a regiment sent to Africa at the time of the first expedition undertaken by the Prince-royal. Vicomte de Sérizy chanced to be the lieutenant-colonel of this regiment. At the affair of the Makta, where

the field had to be abandoned to the Arabs, Monsieur de Sérizy was left wounded under a dead horse. Oscar, discovering this, called out to the squadron:

"Messieurs, it is going to death, but we cannot abandon our colonel."

He dashed upon the enemy, and his electrified soldiers followed him. The Arabs, in their first astonishment at this furious and unlooked-for return, allowed Oscar to seize the viscount, whom he flung across his horse, and carried off at full gallop, — receiving, as he did so, two slashes from yataghans on his left arm.

Oscar's conduct on this occasion was rewarded with the officer's cross of the Legion of honor, and by his promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He took the most affectionate care of the Vicomte de Sérizy, whose mother came to meet him on the arrival of the regiment at Toulon, where, as we know, the young man died of his wounds.

The Comtesse de Sérizy had not separated her son from the man who had shown him such devotion. Oscar himself was so seriously wounded that the surgeons whom the countess had brought with her from Paris thought best to amputate his left arm.

Thus the Comte de Sérizy was led not only to forgive Oscar for his painful remarks on the journey to Presles, but to feel himself his debtor on behalf of his son, now buried in the chapel of the château de Sérizy.

XI.

OSCAR'S LAST BLUNDER.

Some years after the affair at Makta, an old lady, dressed in black, leaning on the arm of a man about thirty-four years of age, in whom observers would recognize a retired officer, from the loss of an arm and the rosette of the Legion of honor in his button-hole, was standing, at eight o'clock, one morning in the month of May, under the porte-cochère of the Lion d'Argent, rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, waiting. apparently, for the departure of a diligence. Undoubtedly Pierrotin, the master of the line of coaches running through the valley of the Oise (despatching one through Saint-Leu-Taverny and Isle-Adam to Beaumont), would scarcely have recognized in this bronzed and maimed officer the little Oscar Husson he had formerly taken to Presles. Madame Husson, at last a widow, was as little recognizable as her son. Clapart, a victim of Fieschi's machine, had served his wife better by death than by all his previous life. The idle lounger was hanging about, as usual, on the boulevard du Temple, gazing at the show, when the explosion The poor widow was put upon the pension list.

made expressly for the families of the victim, at fifteen hundred francs a year.

The coach, to which were harnessed four iron-gray horses that would have done honor to the Messageriesroyales, was divided into three compartments, coupé, intérieur, and rotonde, with an impériale above. It resembled those diligences called "Gondoles," which now ply, in rivalry with the railroad, between Paris and Versailles. Both solid and light, well-painted and well-kept, lined with fine blue cloth, and furnished with blinds of a Moorish pattern and cushions of red morocco, the "Swallow of the Oise" could carry, comfortably, nineteen passengers. Pierrotin, now about fifty-six years old, was little changed. Still dressed in a blue blouse, beneath which he wore a black suit, he smoked his pipe, and superintended the two porters in livery, who were stowing away the luggage in the great impériale.

"Are your places taken?" he said to Madame Clapart and Oscar, eying them like a man who is trying to recall a likeness to his memory.

"Yes, two places for the intérieur in the name of my servant, Bellejambe," replied Oscar; "he must have taken them last evening."

"Ah! monsieur is the new collector of Beaumont," said Pierrotin. "You take the place of Monsieur Margueron's nephew?"

"Yes," replied Oscar, pressing the arm of his mother, who was about to speak.

The officer wished to remain unknown for a time.

Just then Oscar thrilled at hearing the well-remembered voice of Georges Marest calling out from the street: "Pierrotin, have you one seat left?"

"It seems to me you could say 'monsieur' without cracking your throat," replied the master of the line of coaches of the Valley of the Oise, sharply.

Unless by the sound of his voice, Oscar could never have recognized the individual whose jokes had been so fatal to him. Georges, almost bald, retained only three or four tufts of hair above his ears; but these were elaborately frizzed out to conceal, as best they could, the nakedness of the skull. A fleshiness illplaced, in other words, a pear-shaped stomach, altered the once elegant proportions of the ex-young man. Now almost ignoble in appearance and bearing, Georges exhibited the traces of disasters in love and a life of debauchery in his blotched skin and bloated, vinous features. The eyes had lost the brilliancy, the vivacity of youth which chaste or studious habits have the virtue to retain. Dressed like a man who is careless of his clothes, Georges were a pair of shabby trousers, with straps intended for varnished boots; but his were of leather, thick-soled, ill-blacked, and of many months' wear. A faded waistcoat, a cravat, pretentiously tied, although the material was a wornout foulard, bespoke the secret distress to which a former dandy sometimes falls a prey. Moreover, Georges appeared at this hour of the morning in an evening coat, instead of a surtout; a sure diagnostic of actual poverty. This coat, which had seen long service at balls, had now, like its master, passed from the opulent ease of former times to daily work. The seams of the black cloth showed whitening lines; the collar was greasy; long usage had frayed the edges of the sleeves into fringes.

And yet, Georges ventured to attract attention by vellow kid gloves, rather dirty, it is true, on the outside of which a signet ring defined a large dark spot. Round his crayat, which was slipped into a pretentious gold ring, was a chain of silk, representing hair, which, no doubt, held a watch. His hat, though worn rather jauntily, revealed, more than any of the above symptoms, the poverty of a man who was totally unable to pay sixteen francs to a hat-maker, being forced to live from hand to mouth. The former admirer of Florentine twirled a cane with a chased gold knob, which was horribly battered. The blue trousers, the waistcoat of a material called "Scotch stuff," a sky-blue cravat and a pink-striped cotton shirt, expressed, in the midst of all this ruin, such a latent desire to show-off that the contrast was not only a sight to see, but a lesson to be learned.

"And that is Georges!" said Oscar, in his own mind, — "a man I left in possession of thirty thousand francs a year!"

"Has Monsieur de Pierrotin a place in the coupé?" asked Georges, ironically replying to Pierrotin's rebuff.

"No; my coupé is taken by a peer of France, the son-in-law of Monsieur Moreau, Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, his wife, and his mother-in-law. I have nothing left but one place in the intérieur."

"The devil! so peers of France still travel in your coach, do they?" said Georges, remembering his adventure with the Comte de Sérizy. "Well, I'll take that place in the intérieur."

He cast a glance of examination on Oscar and his mother, but did not recognize them.

Oscar's skin was now bronzed by the sun of Africa; his moustache was very thick and his whiskers ample; the hollows in his cheeks and his strongly marked features were in keeping with his military bearing. The rosette of an officer of the Legion of honor, his missing arm, the strict propriety of his dress, would all have diverted Georges' recollections of his former victim if he had had any. As for Madame Clapart, whom Georges had scarcely seen, ten years devoted to the exercise of the most severe piety had transformed her. No one would ever have imagined that that gray sister concealed the Aspasia of 1797.

An enormous old man, very simply dressed, though his clothes were good and substantial, in whom Oscar recognized Père Léger, here came slowly and heavily along. He nodded familiarly to Pierrotin, who appeared by his manner to pay him the respect due in all lands to millionnaires."

"Ha! ha! why, here 's Père Léger! more and more preponderant!" cried Georges.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked old Léger, curtly.

"What! you don't recognize Colonel Georges, the friend of Ali pacha? We travelled together once upon a time, in company with the Comte de Sérizy."

One of the habitual follies of those who have fallen in the world is to recognize and desire the recognition of others.

"You are much changed," said the ex-farmer, now twice a millionnaire.

"All things change," said Georges. "Look at the Lion d'Argent and Pierrotin's coach; they are not a bit like what they were fourteen years ago."

"Pierrotin now controls the whole service of the Valley of the Oise," replied Monsieur Léger, "and sends out five coaches. He is the *bourgeois* of Beaumont, where he keeps a hotel, at which all the diligences stop, and he has a wife and daughter who are not a bad help to him."

An old man of seventy here came out of the hotel and joined the group of travellers who were waiting to get into the coach.

"Come along, papa Reybert," said Léger, "we are only waiting now for your great man."

"Here he comes," said the steward of Presles, pointing to Joseph Bridau.

Neither Georges nor Oscar recognized the illustrious artist, for his face had the worn and haggard lines that were now famous, and his bearing was that which is given by success. The ribbon of the Legion of honor adorned his black coat, and the rest of his dress, which was extremely elegant, seemed to denote an expedition to some rural fête.

At this moment a clerk, with a paper in his hand, came out of the office (which was now in the former kitchen of the Lion d'Argent), and stood before the door of the empty coupé.

"Monsieur and Madame de Canalis, three places," he said. Then, moving to the door of the intérieur, he named, consecutively, "Monsieur Bellejambe, two places; Monsieur de Reybert, three places; Monsieur, — your name, if you please?" he said to Georges.

"Georges Marest," said the fallen man, in a low voice.

The clerk then moved to the rotonde, before which were grouped a number of nurses, country-people, and

petty shopkeepers, who were bidding each other adieu. Then, after bundling in the six passengers, he called to four young men who mounted to the imperial; after which he cried: "Start!" Pierrotin got up beside his driver, a young man in a blouse, who called out: "Pull!" to his animals, and the vehicle, drawn by four horses bought at Roye, mounted the rise of the faubourg Saint-Denis at a slow trot.

But no sooner had it got above Saint-Laurent than it raced like a mail-cart to Saint-Denis, which it reached in forty minutes. No stop was made at the cheese-cake inn, and the coach took the road through the valley of Montmorency.

It was at the turn into this road that Georges broke the silence which the travellers had so far maintained while observing each other.

- "We go a little faster than we did fifteen years ago, hey, Père Léger?" he said, pulling out a silver watch.
- "Persons are usually good enough to call me Monsieur Léger," said the millionnaire.
- "Why, here's our *blagueur* of the famous journey to Presles," cried Joseph Bridau. "Have you made any new campaigns in Asia, Africa, or America?"
- "Sacrebleu! I've made the revolution of July, and that's enough for me, for it ruined me."
- "Ah! you made the revolution of July!" cried the painter, laughing. "Well, I always said it never made itself."

"How people meet again!" said Monsieur Léger, turning to Monsieur de Reybert. "This, papa Reybert, is the clerk of the notary to whom you undoubtedly owe the stewardship of Presles."

"We lack Mistigris, now famous under his own name of Léon de Lora," said Joseph Bridau, "and the little young man who was stupid enough to talk to the count about those skin diseases which are now cured, and about his wife, whom he has recently left that he may die in peace."

"And the count himself, you lack him," said old Reybert.

"I'm afraid," said Joseph Bridau, sadly, "that the last journey the count will ever take will be from Presles to Isle-Adam, to be present at my marriage."

"He still drives about the park," said Reybert.

"Does his wife come to see him?" asked Léger.

"Once a month," replied Reybert. "She is never happy out of Paris. Last September she married her niece, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, on whom, since the death of her son, she spends all her affection, to a very rich young Pole, the Comte Laginski."

"To whom," asked Madame Clapart, "will Monsieur de Sérizy's property go?"

"To his wife, who will bury him," replied Georges.

"The countess is still fine-looking for a woman of fifty-four years of age. She is very elegant, and, at a little distance, gives one the illusion—"

- "She will always be an illusion to you," said Léger, who seemed inclined to revenge himself on his former hoaxer.
- "I respect her," replied Georges. "But, by the bye, what became of that steward whom the count turned off?"
- "Moreau?" said Léger; "why, he's the deputy from the Oise."
- "Ha! the famous Centre man; Moreau de l'Oise?" cried Georges.
- "Yes," returned Léger, "Moreau de l'Oise. He did more than you for the revolution of July, and he has since bought the beautiful estate of Pointel, between Presles and Beaumont."
- "Next to the count's," said Georges. "I call that very bad taste."
- "Don't speak so loud," said Monsieur de Reybert, "for Madame Moreau and her daughter, the Baronne de Canalis, and the Baron himself, the former minister, are in the coupé."
- "What dot could be have given his daughter to induce our great orator to marry her?" said Georges.
 - "Something like two millions," replied old Léger.
- "He always had a taste for millions," remarked Georges. "He began his pile surreptitiously at Presles—"
 - "Say nothing against Monsieur Moreau," cried

Oscar, hastily. "You ought to have learned before now to hold your tongue in public conveyances."

Joseph Bridau looked at the one-armed officer for several seconds; then he said, smiling:—

"Monsieur is not an ambassador, but his rosette tells us he has made his way nobly; my brother and General Giroudeau have repeatedly named him in their reports."

"Oscar Husson!" cried Georges. "Faith! if it had n't been for your voice I should never have known you."

"Ah! it was monsieur who so bravely rescued the Vicomte Jules de Sérizy from the Arabs?" said Reybert," and for whom the count has obtained the collectorship of Beaumont while awaiting that of Pontoise?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Oscar.

"I hope you will give me the pleasure, monsieur," said the great painter, "of being present at my marriage at Isle-Adam."

"Whom do you marry?" asked Oscar, after accepting the invitation.

"Mademoiselle Léger," replied Joseph Bridau, "the granddaughter of Monsieur de Reybert. Monsieur le comte was kind enough to arrange the marriage for me. As an artist I owe him a great deal, and he wished, before his death, to secure my future, about which I did not think, myself."

"Whom did Père Léger marry?" asked Georges.

"My daughter," replied Monsieur de Reybert, "and without a dot."

"Ah!" said Georges, assuming a more respectful manner towards Monsieur Léger, "I am fortunate in having chosen this particular day to do the valley of the Oise. You can all be useful to me, gentlemen."

"How so?" asked Monsieur Léger.

"In this way," replied Georges. "I am employed by the 'Espérance,' a company just formed, the statutes of which have been approved by an ordinance of the King. This institution gives, at the end of ten years, dowries to young girls, annuities to old men; it pays the education of children, and takes charge, in short, of the fortunes of everybody."

"I can well believe it," said Père Léger, smiling. "In a word, you are a runner for an insurance company."

"No, monsieur. I am the inspector-general; charged with the duty of establishing correspondents and appointing the agents of the company throughout France. I am only operating until the agents are selected; for it is a matter as delicate as it is difficult to find honest agents."

"But how did you lose your thirty thousand a year?" asked Oscar.

"As you lost your arm," replied the son of Czerni-Georges, curtly.

"Then you must have shared in some brilliant action," remarked Oscar, with a sarcasm not unmixed with bitterness.

"Parbleu! I've too many—shares! that's just what I want to sell."

By this time they had arrived at Saint-Leu-Taverny, where all the passengers got out while the coach changed horses. Oscar admired the liveliness which Pierrotin displayed in unhooking the traces from the whiffle-trees, while his driver cleared the reins from the leaders.

"Poor Pierrotin," thought he; "he has stuck like me, — not far advanced in the world. Georges has fallen low. All the others, thanks to speculation and to talent, have made their fortune. Do we breakfast here, Pierrotin?" he said, aloud, slapping that worthy on the shoulder.

"I am not the driver," said Pierrotin.

"What are you, then?" asked Colonel Husson.

"The proprietor," replied Pierrotin.

"Come, don't be vexed with an old acquaintance," said Oscar, motioning to his mother, but still retaining his patronizing manner. "Don't you recognize Madame Clapart?"

It was all the nobler of Oscar to present his mother

to Pierrotin, because, at that moment, Madame Moreau de l'Oise, getting out of the coupé, overheard the name, and stared disdainfully at Oscar and his mother.

"My faith! madame," said Pierrotin, "I should never have known you; nor you, either, monsieur; the sun burns black in Africa, does n't it?"

The species of pity which Oscar thus felt for Pierrotin was the last blunder that vanity ever led our hero to commit and, like his other faults, it was punished, but very gently, thus:—

Two months after his official installation at Beaumont-sur-Oise, Oscar was paying his addresses to Mademoiselle Georgette Pierrotin, whose dot amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand francs, and he married the pretty daughter of the proprietor of the stage-coaches of the Oise, toward the close of the winter of 1838.

The adventure of the journey to Presles was a lesson to Oscar Husson in discretion; his disaster at Florentine's card-party strengthened him in honesty and uprightness; the hardships of his military career taught him to understand the social hierarchy and to yield obedience to his lot. Becoming wise and capable, he was happy. The Comte de Sérizy, before his death, obtained for him the collectorship at Pontoise. The influence of Monsieur Moreau de l'Oise and that of the Comtesse de Sérizy and the Baron de Canalis

secured, in after years, a receiver-generalship for Monsieur Husson, in whom the Camusot family now recognize a relation.

Oscar is a commonplace man, gentle, without assumption, modest, and always keeping, like his government, to a middle course. He excites neither envy nor contempt. In short, he is the modern bourgeois.



VENDETTA.

To PUTTINATI, MILANESE SCULPTOR.

I.

PROLOGUE.

In the year 1800, toward the close of October, a foreigner, accompanied by a woman and a little girl, was standing for a long time in front of the palace of the Tuileries, near the ruins of a house recently pulled down, at the point where in our day the wing begins which was intended to unite the château of Catherine de Medici with the Louvre of the Valois.

The man stood there with folded arms and a bowed head, which he sometimes raised to look alternately at the consular palace and at his wife, who was sitting near him on a stone. Though the woman seemed wholly occupied with the little girl of nine or ten years of age, whose long black hair she amused herself by handling, she lost not a single glance of those her com-

panion cast on her. Some sentiment other than love united these two beings, and inspired with mutual anxiety their movements and their thoughts. Misery is, perhaps, the most powerful of all ties.

The stranger had one of those broad, serious heads, covered with thick hair, which we see so frequently in the pictures of the Caracci. The jet black of the hair was streaked with white. Though noble and proud, his features had a hardness which spoiled them. In spite of his evident strength, and his straight, erect figure, he looked to be over sixty years of age. His dilapidated clothes were those of a foreign country. Though the faded and once beautiful face of the wife betrayed the deepest sadness, she forced herself to smile, assuming a calm countenance whenever her husband looked at her.

The little girl was standing, though signs of weariness were on the youthful face, which was tanned by the sun. She had an Italian cast of countenance and bearing, large black eyes beneath their well arched brows, a native nobleness, and candid grace. More than one of those who passed them felt strongly moved by the mere aspect of this group, who made no effort to conceal a despair which seemed as deep as the expression of it was simple. But the flow of this fugitive sympathy, characteristic of Parisians, was dried immediately; for as soon as the stranger saw himself the

object of attention, he looked at his observer with so savage an air that the boldest lounger hurried his step as though he had trod upon a serpent.

After standing for some time undecided, the tall stranger suddenly passed his hand across his face to brush away, as it were, the thoughts that were ploughing furrows in it. He must have taken some desperate resolution. Casting a glance upon his wife and daughter, he drew a dagger from his breast and gave it to his companion, saying in Italian:—

"I will see if the Bonapartes remember us."

Then he walked with a slow, determined step toward the entrance of the palace, where he was, naturally, stopped by a soldier of the consular guard, with whom he was not permitted a long discussion. Seeing the man's obstinate determination, the sentinel presented his bayonet in the form of an ultimatum. Chance willed that the guard was changed at that moment, and the corporal very obligingly pointed out to the stranger the spot where the commander of the post was standing.

"Let Bonaparte know that Bartolomeo di Piombo wishes to speak with him," said the Italian to the captain on duty.

In vain the officer represented to Bartolomeo that he could not see the First Consul without having previously requested an audience in writing; the Italian insisted that the soldier should go to Bonaparte. The officer

stated the rules of the post, and refused to comply with the order of this singular visitor. Bartolomeo frowned heavily, casting a terrible look at the captain, as if he made him responsible for the misfortunes that this refusal might occasion. Then he kept silence, folded his arms tightly across his breast, and took up his station under the portico which serves as an avenue of communication between the garden and the court-yard of the Tuileries. Persons who will things intensely are very apt to be helped by chance. At the moment when Bartolomeo di Piombo seated himself on one of the stone posts which was near the entrance, a carriage drew up, from which Lucien Bonaparte, minister of the interior, issued.

"Ah, Loucian, it is lucky for me I have met you!" cried the stranger.

These words, said in the Corsican patois, stopped Lucien at the moment when he was springing under the portico. He looked at his compatriot, and recognized him. At the first word that Bartolomeo said in his ear, he took the Corsican away with him.

Murat, Lannes, and Rapp were at that moment in the cabinet of the First Consul. As Lucien entered, followed by a man so singular in appearance as Piombo, the conversation ceased. Lucien took Napoleon by the arm and led him into the recess of a window. After exchanging a few words with his brother, the First Consul made a sign with his hand, which Murat and Lannes obeyed by retiring. Rapp pretended not to have seen it, in order to remain where he was. Bonaparte then spoke to him sharply, and the aide-de-camp, with evident unwillingness, left the room. The First Consul, who listened for Rapp's step in the adjoining salon, opened the door suddenly, and found his aide-de-camp close to the wall of the cabinet.

"Do you choose not to understand me?" said the First Consul. "I wish to be alone with my compatriot."

"A Corsican!" replied the aide-de-camp. "I distrust those fellows too much to—"

The First Consul could not restrain a smile as he pushed his faithful officer by the shoulders.

"Well, what has brought you here, my poor Bartolomeo?" said Napoleon.

"To ask asylum and protection from you, if you are a true Corsican," replied Bartolomeo, roughly.

"What ill fortune drove you from the island? You were the richest, the most—"

"I have killed all the Portas," replied the Corsican, in a deep voice, frowning heavily.

The First Consul took two steps backward in surprise.

"Do you mean to betray me?" cried Bartolomeo, with a darkling look at Bonaparte. "Do you know that there are still four Piombos in Corsica?"

Lucien took an arm of his compatriot and shook it. "Did you come here to threaten the savior of France?" he said.

Bonaparte made a sign to Lucien, who kept silence. Then he looked at Piombo and said:—

"Why did you kill the Portas?"

"We had made friends," replied the man; "the Barbantis reconciled us. The day after we had drunk together to drown our quarrels, I left home because I had business at Bastia. The Portas remained in my house, and set fire to my vineyard at Longone. killed my son Gregorio. My daughter Ginevra and my wife, having taken the sacrament that morning, escaped; the Virgin protected them. When I returned I found no house; my feet were in its ashes as I searched for it. Suddenly they struck against the body of Gregorio; I recognized him in the moonlight. 'The Portas have dealt me this blow,' I said; and, forthwith, I went to the woods, and there I called together all the men whom I had ever served, - do you hear me, Bonaparte? — and we marched to the vineyard of the Portas. We got there at five in the morning; at seven they were all before God. Giacomo declares that Éliza Vanni saved a child, Luigi. But-I myself bound him in his bed before setting fire to the I have left the island with my wife and child without being able to discover whether, indeed, Luigi Porta is alive."

Bonaparte looked with curiosity at Bartolomeo, but without surprise.

"How many were there?" asked Lucien.

"Seven," replied Piombo. "All of them were your persecutors in the olden time."

These words roused no expression of hatred on the part of the two brothers.

"Ha! you are no longer Corsicans!" cried Piombo, with a sort of despair. "Farewell. In other days I protected you," he added, in a reproachful tone. "Without me, your mother would never have reached Marseille," he said, addressing himself to Bonaparte, who was silent and thoughtful, his elbow resting on the mantel-shelf.

"As a matter of duty, Piombo," said Napoleon at last, "I cannot take you under my wing. I have become the leader of a great nation; I command the Republic; I am bound to execute the laws."

"Ha! ha!" said Bartolomeo, scornfully.

"But I can shut my eyes," continued Bonaparte. "The tradition of the Vendetta will long prevent the reign of law in Corsica," he added, as if speaking to himself. "But it must be destroyed, at any cost."

Bonaparte was silent for a few moments, and Lucien made a sign to Piombo not to speak. The Corsican was swaying his head from right to left in deep disapproval.

"Live here, in Paris," resumed the First Consul, addressing Bartolomeo; "we will know nothing of this affair. I will cause your property in Corsica to be bought, to give you enough to live on for the present. Later, before long, we will think of you. But, remember, no more vendetta! There are no woods here to fly to. If you play with daggers, you must expect no mercy. Here, the law protects all citizens; and no one is allowed to do justice for himself."

"He has made himself the head of a singular nation," said Bartolomeo, taking Lucien's hand and pressing it. "But you have both recognized me in misfortune, and I am yours, henceforth, for life or death. You may dispose as you will of the Piombos."

With these words his Corsican brow unbent, and he looked about him in satisfaction.

"You are not badly off here," he said, smiling, as if he meant to lodge there himself. "You are all in red, like a cardinal."

"Your success depends upon yourself; you can have a palace, also," said Bonaparte, watching his compatriot with a keen eye. "It will often happen that I shall need some faithful friend in whom I can confide."

A sigh of joy heaved the vast chest of the Corsican, who held out his hand to the First Consul, saying:—
"The Corsican is in you still."

Bonaparte smiled. He looked in silence at the man

who brought, as it were, a waft of air from his own land,—from that isle where he had been so miraculously saved from the hatred of the "English party;" the land he was never to see again. He made a sign to his brother, who then took Piombo away. Lucien inquired with interest as to the financial condition of the former protector of their family. Piombo took him to a window and showed him his wife and Ginevra, seated on a heap of stones.

"We came from Fontainebleau on foot; we have not a single penny," he said.

Lucien gave his purse to his compatriot, telling him to come to him the next day, that arrangements might be made to secure the comfort of the family. The value of Piombo's property in Corsica, if sold, would scarcely maintain him honorably in Paris.

Fifteen years elapsed between the time of Piombo's arrival with his family in Paris and the following event, which would be scarcely intelligible to the reader without this narrative of the foregoing circumstances.

П.

THE STUDIO.

Servin, one of our most distinguished artists, was the first to conceive the idea of opening a studio for young girls who wished to take lessons in painting.

About forty years of age, a man of the purest morals, entirely given up to his art, he had married from inclination the dowerless daughter of a general. At first the mothers of his pupils brought their daughters themselves to the studio; then they were satisfied to send them alone, after knowing the master's principles and the pains he took to deserve their confidence.

It was the artist's intention to take no pupils but young ladies belonging to rich families of good position, in order to meet with no complaints as to the composition of his classes. He even refused to take girls who wished to become artists; for to them he would have been obliged to give certain instructions without which no talent could advance in the profession. Little by little his prudence and the ability with which he initiated his pupils into his art, the certainty each mother felt that her daughter was in company with none but well-bred young girls, and the fact of

the artist's marriage, gave him an excellent reputation as a teacher in society. When a young girl wished to learn to draw, and her mother asked advice of her friends, the answer was, invariably: "Send her to Servin's."

Servin became, therefore, for feminine art, a specialty; like Herbault for bonnets, Leroy for gowns, and Chevet for eatables. It was recognized that a young woman who had taken lessons from Servin was capable of judging the paintings of the Musée conclusively, of making a striking portrait, copying an ancient master, or painting a genre picture. The artist thus sufficed for the educational needs of the aristocracy. But in spite of these relations with the best families in Paris, he was independent and patriotic, and he maintained among them that easy, brilliant, half-ironical tone, and that freedom of judgment which characterize painters.

He had carried his scrupulous precaution into the arrangements of the locality where his pupils studied. The entrance to the attic above his apartments was walled up. To reach this retreat, as sacred as a harem, it was necessary to go up a small spiral staircase made within his own rooms. The studio, occupying nearly the whole attic floor under the roof, presented to the eye those vast proportions which surprise inquirers when, after attaining sixty feet above the

ground-floor, they expect to find an artist squeezed into a gutter.

This gallery, so to speak, was profusely lighted from above, through enormous panes of glass furnished with those green linen shades by means of which all artists arrange the light. A quantity of caricatures, heads drawn at a stroke, either in color or with the point of a knife, on walls painted in a dark gray, proved that, barring a difference in expression, the most distinguished young girls have as much fun and folly in their minds as men. A small stove with a large pipe, which described a fearful zigzag before it reached the upper regions of the roof, was the necessary and infallible ornament of the room. A shelf ran round the walls, on which were models in plaster, heterogeneously placed, most of them covered with gray dust. Here and there, above this shelf, a head of Niobe, hanging to a nail, presented her pose of woe; a Venus smiled; a hand thrust itself forward like that of a pauper asking alms; a few écorchés, yellowed by smoke, looked like limbs snatched over-night from a graveyard; besides these objects, pictures, drawings, lay figures, frames without paintings, and paintings without frames gave to this irregular apartment that studio physiognomy which is distinguished for its singular jumble of ornament and bareness, poverty and riches, care and neglect. The vast receptacle of an atelier, where all seems small, even man, has something the air of an Opera coulisse; here lie ancient garments, gilded armor, fragments of stuffs, machinery. And yet there is something mysteriously grand, like thought, in it; genius and death are there; Diana and Apollo beside a skull or skeleton, beauty and destruction, poesy and reality, colors glowing in the shadows, often a whole drama, motionless and silent. Strange symbol of an artist's head!

At the moment when this history begins, a brilliant July sun was illuminating the studio, and two rays striking athwart it lengthwise, traced diaphanous gold lines in which the dust was shimmering. A dozen easels raised their sharp points like masts in a port. Several young girls were animating the scene by the variety of their expressions, their attitudes, and the differences in their toilets. The strong shadows cast by the green serge curtains, arranged according to the needs of each easel, produced a multitude of contrasts, and the piquant effects of light and shade. This group was the prettiest of all the pictures in the studio.

A fair young girl, very simply dressed, sat at some distance from her companions, working bravely, and seeming to be in dread of some mishap. No one looked at her, or spoke to her; she was much the prettiest, the most modest, and, apparently, the least rich among them. Two principal groups, distinctly sepa-

rated from each other, showed the presence of two sets or cliques, two minds even here, in this studio, where one might suppose that rank and fortune would be forgotten.

But, however that might be, these young girls, sitting or standing, in the midst of their color-boxes, playing with their brushes or preparing them, handling their dazzling palettes, painting, laughing, talking, singing, absolutely natural, and exhibiting their real selves, composed a spectacle unknown to man. of them, proud, haughty, capricious, with black hair and beautiful hands, was casting the flame of her glance here and there at random; another, light-hearted and gay, a smile upon her lips, with chestnut hair and delicate white hands, was a typical French virgin, thoughtless, and without hidden thoughts, living her natural real life; a third was dreamy, melancholy, pale, bending her head like a drooping flower; her neighbor, on the contrary, tall, indolent, with Asiatic habits, long eyes, moist and black, said but little, and reflected, glancing covertly at the head of Antinous.

Among them, like the jocoso of a Spanish play, full of wit and epigrammatic sallies, another girl was watching the rest with a comprehensive glance, making them laugh, and tossing up her head, too lively and arch not to be pretty. She appeared to rule the first group of girls, who were the daughters of bankers,

notaries, and merchants,—all rich, but aware of the imperceptible though cutting slights which another group belonging to the aristocracy put upon them. The latter were led by the daughter of one of the King's ushers, a little creature, as silly as she was vain, proud of being the daughter of a man with "an office at court." She was a girl who always pretended to understand the remarks of the master at the first word, and seemed to do her work as a favor to him. She used an eyeglass, came very much dressed, and always late, and entreated her companions to speak low.

In this second group were several girls with exquisite figures and distinguished features, but there was little in their glance or expression that was simple and candid. Though their attitudes were elegant and their movements graceful, their faces lacked frankness; it was easy to see that they belonged to a world where polite manners form the character from early youth, and the abuse of social pleasures destroys sentiment and develops egotism.

But when the whole class was here assembled, child-like heads were seen among this bevy of young girls, ravishingly pure and virgin, faces with lips half-opened, through which shone spotless teeth, and on which a virgin smile was flickering. The studio then resembled not a studio, but a group of angels seated on a cloud in ether.

By mid-day, on this occasion, Servin had not appeared. For some days past he had spent most of his time in a studio which he kept elsewhere, where he was giving the last touches to a picture for the Exposition. All of a sudden Mademoiselle Amélie Thirion, the leader of the aristocrats, began to speak in a low voice, and very earnestly, to her neighbor. A great silence fell on the group of patricians, and the commercial party, surprised, were equally silent, trying to discover the subject of this earnest conference. The secret of the young ultras was soon revealed.

Amélie rose, took an easel which stood near hers, carried it to a distance from the noble group, and placed it close to a board partition which separated the studio from the extreme end of the attic, where all broken casts, defaced canvases and the winter supply of wood were kept. Amélie's action caused a murmur of surprise, which did not prevent her from accomplishing the change by rolling hastily to the side of the easel the stool, the box of colors, and even the picture by Prudhon, which the absent pupil was copying. After this coup d'état the Right began to work in silence, but the Left discoursed at length.

"What will Mademoiselle Piombo say to that?" asked a young girl of Mademoiselle Matilde Roguin, the lively oracle of the banking group.

"She's not a girl to say anything," was the reply;

"but fifty years hence she'll remember the insult as if it were done to her the night before, and revenge it cruelly. She is a person that I, for one, don't want to be at war with."

"The slight these young ladies mean to put upon her is all the more unkind," said another young girl, "because yesterday, Mademoiselle Ginevra was very sad. Her father, they say, has just resigned. They ought not to add to her trouble, for she was very considerate of them during the Hundred Days. Never did she say a word to wound them. On the contrary, she avoided politics. But I think our ultrus are acting more from jealousy than from party spite."

"I have a great mind to go and get Mademoiselle Piombo's easel and place it next to mine," said Matilde Roguin. She rose, but second thoughts made her sit down again.

"With a character like hers," she said, "one can't tell how she would take a civility; better wait events."

"Ecco la," said the young girl with the black eyes, languidly.

The steps of a person coming up the narrow stairway sounded through the studio. The words: "Here she comes!" passed from mouth to mouth, and then the most absolute silence reigned.

To understand the importance of the ostracism imposed by the act of Amélie Thirion, it is necessary

to add that this scene took place toward the end of the month of July, 1815. The second return of the Bourbons had shaken many friendships which had held firm under the first Restoration. At this moment families, almost all divided in opinion, were renewing many of the deplorable scenes which stain the history of all countries in times of civil or religious wars. Children, young girls, old men shared the monarchial fever to which the country was then a victim. Discord glided beneath all roofs; distrust dyed with its gloomy colors the words and the actions of the most intimate friends.

Ginevra Piombo loved Napoleon to idolatry; how, then, could she hate him? The emperor was her compatriot and the benefactor of her father. The Baron di Piombo was among those of Napoleon's devoted servants who had co-operated most effectually in the return from Elba. Incapable of denying his political faith, anxious even to confess it, the old baron remained in Paris in the midst of his enemies. Ginevra Piombo was all the more open to condemnation because she made no secret of the grief which the second Restoration caused to her family. The only tears she had so far shed in life were drawn from her by the twofold news of Napoleon's captivity on the "Bellerophon," and Labédoyère's arrest.

The girls of the aristocratic group of pupils belonged

to the most devoted royalist families in Paris. It would be difficult to give an idea of the exaggerations prevalent at this epoch, and of the horror inspired by the Bonapartists. However insignificant and petty Amélie's action may now seem to be, it was at that time a very natural expression of the prevailing hatred. Ginevra Piombo, one of Servin's first pupils, had occupied the place that was now taken from her since the first day of her coming to the studio. The aristocratic circle had gradually surrounded her. To drive her from a place that in some sense belonged to her was not only to insult her, but to cause her a species of artistic pain; for all artists have a spot of predilection where they work.

Nevertheless, political prejudice was not the chief influence on the conduct of the Right clique of the studio. Ginevra, much the ablest of Servin's pupils, was an object of intense jealousy. The master testified as much admiration for the talents as for the character of this favorite pupil, who served as a conclusion to all his comparisons. In fact, without any one being able to explain the ascendency which this young girl obtained over all who came in contact with her, she exercised over the little world around her a prestige not unlike that of Bonaparte upon his soldiers.

The aristocracy of the studio had for some days past resolved upon the fall of this queen, but no one had, as yet, ventured to openly avoid the Bonapartist. Mademoiselle Thirion's act was, therefore, a decisive stroke, intended by her to force the others into becoming, openly, the accomplices of her hatred. Though Ginevra was sincerely loved by several of these royalists, nearly all of whom were indoctrinated at home with their political ideas, they decided, with the tactics peculiar to women, that they should do best to keep themselves aloof from the quarrel.

On Ginevra's arrival she was received, as we have said, in profound silence. Of all the young women who had, so far, come to Servin's studio, she was the handsomest, the tallest, and the best made. Her carriage and demeanor had a character of nobility and grace which commanded respect. Her face, instinct with intelligence, seemed to radiate light, so inspired was it with the enthusiasm peculiar to Corsicans, — which does not, however, preclude calmness. Her long hair and her black eyes and lashes expressed passion; the corners of her mouth, too softly defined, and the lips, a trifle too marked, gave signs of that kindliness which strong beings derive from the consciousness of their strength.

By a singular caprice of nature, the charm of her face was, in some degree, contradicted by a marble forehead, on which lay an almost savage pride, and from which seemed to emanate the moral instincts of a Corsican. In that was the only link between herself and her native land. All the rest of her person, her simplicity, the easy grace of her Lombard beauty, was so seductive that it was difficult for those who looked at her to give her pain. She inspired such keen attraction that her old father caused her, as matter of precaution, to be accompanied to and from the studio. The only defect of this truly poetic creature came from the very power of a beauty so fully developed; she looked a woman. Marriage she had refused out of love to her father and mother, feeling herself necessary to the comfort of their old age. Her taste for painting took the place of the passions and interests which usually absorb her sex.

"You are very silent to-day, mesdemoiselles," she said, after advancing a little way among her companions. "Good-morning, my little Laure," she added, in a soft, caressing voice, approaching the young girl who was painting apart from the rest. "That head is strong, — the flesh tints a little too rosy, but the drawing is excellent."

Laure raised her head and looked tenderly at Ginevra; their faces beamed with the expression of a mutual affection. A faint smile brightened the lips of the young Italian, who seemed thoughtful, and walked slowly to her easel, glancing carelessly at the drawings and paintings on her way, and bidding good-morning to each of the young girls of the first group, not observing the unusual curiosity excited by her presence. She was like a queen in the midst of her court; she paid no attention to the profound silence that reigned among the patricians, and passed before their camp without pronouncing a single word. Her absorption seemed so great that she sat down before her easel, opened her color-box, took up her brushes, drew on her brown sleeves, arranged her apron, looked at her picture, examined her palette, without, apparently, thinking of what she was doing. All heads in the group of the bourgeoises were turned toward her. If the young ladies in the Thirion camp did not show their impatience with the same frankness, their sidelong glances were none the less directed on Ginevra.

"She has n't noticed it!" said Mademoiselle Roguin.

At this instant Ginevra abandoned the meditative attitude in which she had been contemplating her canvas, and turned her head toward the group of aristocrats. She measured, at a glance, the distance that now separated her from them; but she said nothing.

"It has n't occurred to her that they meant to insult her," said Matilde; "she neither colored nor turned pale. How vexed those girls will be if she likes her new place as well as the old! You are out of bounds, mademoiselle," she added, aloud, addressing Ginevra.

The Italian pretended not to hear; perhaps she really did not hear. She rose abruptly; walked with a certain deliberation along the side of the partition which separated the adjoining closet from the studio, and seemed to be examining the sash through which her light came, — giving so much importance to it that she mounted a chair to raise the green serge, which intercepted the light, much higher. Reaching that height, her eye was on a level with a slight opening in the partition, the real object of her efforts, for the glance that she cast through it can be compared only to that of a miser discovering Aladdin's treasure. Then she sprang down hastily and returned to her place, changed the position of her picture, pretended to be still dissatisfied with the light, pushed a table close to the partition, on which she placed a chair, climbed lightly to the summit of this erection, and again looked through the crevice. She cast but one glance into the space beyond, which was lighted through a skylight; but what she saw produced so strong an effect upon her that she tottered.

"Take care, Mademoiselle Ginevra, you'll fall!" cried Laure.

All the young girls gazed at the imprudent climber, and the fear of their coming to her gave her courage; she recovered her equilibrium, and replied, as she balanced herself on the shaking chair:—

"Pooh! it is more solid than a throne!"

She then secured the curtain and came down, pushed the chair and table as far as possible from the partition, returned to her easel, and seemed to be arranging it to suit the volume of light she had now thrown upon Her picture, however, was not in her mind, which was wholly bent on getting as near as possible to the closet, against the door of which she finally settled herself. Then she began to prepare her palette in the deepest silence. Sitting there, she could hear, distinctly, a sound which had strongly excited her curiosity the evening before, and had whirled her young imagination across vast fields of conjecture. She recognized the firm and regular breathing of a man whom she had just seen asleep. Her curiosity was satisfied beyond her expectations, but at the same time she felt saddled by an immense responsibility. Through the opening in the wall she had seen the Imperial eagle; and upon the flock bed, faintly lighted from above, lay the form of an officer of the Guard. She guessed all. Servin was hiding a proscribed man!

She now trembled lest any of her companions should come near her to examine her picture, when the regular breathing or some deeper breath might reveal to them. as it had to her, the presence of this political victim. She resolved to keep her place beside that door, trusting to her wits to baffle all dangerous chances that might arise.

"Better that I should be here," thought she, "to prevent some luckless accident, than leave that poor man at the mercy of a heedless betrayal."

This was the secret of the indifference which Ginevra had apparently shown to the removal of her easel. She was inwardly enchanted, because the change had enabled her to gratify her curiosity in a natural manner; besides, at this moment, she was too keenly preoccupied to perceive the reason of her removal.

Nothing is more mortifying to young girls, or, indeed, to all the world, than to see a piece of mischief, an insult, or a biting speech, miss its effect through the contempt or the indifference of the intended victim. It seems as if hatred to an enemy grows in proportion to the height that enemy is raised above us. Ginevra's behavior was an enigma to all her companions; her friends and enemies were equally surprised; for the former claimed for her all good qualities, except that of forgiveness of injuries. Though, of course, the occasions for displaying that vice of nature were seldom afforded to Ginevra in the life of a studio, still, the specimens she had now and then given of her vindictive disposition had left a strong impression on the minds of her companions.

After many conjectures, Mademoiselle Roguin came

to the conclusion that the Italian's silence showed a grandeur of soul beyond all praise; and the banking circle, inspired by her, formed a project to humiliate the aristocracy. They succeeded in that aim by a fire of sarcasms which presently brought down the pride of the Right coterie.

Madame Servin's arrival put a stop to the struggle. With the shrewdness that usually accompanies malice, Amélie Thirion had noticed, analyzed, and mentally commented on the extreme preoccupation of Ginevra's mind, which prevented her from even hearing the bitterly polite war of words of which she was the object. The vengeance Mademoiselle Roguin and her companions were inflicting on Mademoiselle Thirion and her group had, therefore, the fatal effect of driving the young ultras to search for the cause of the silence so obstinately maintained by Ginevra di Piombo. The beautiful Italian became the centre of all glances, and she was henceforth watched by friends and foes alike.

It is very difficult to hide even a slight emotion or sentiment from fifteen inquisitive and unoccupied young girls, whose wits and mischief ask for nothing better than secrets to guess, schemes to create or baffle, and who know how to find too many interpretations for each gesture, glance, and word, to fail in discovering the right one.

At this moment, however, the presence of Madame Servin produced an interlude in the drama thus played below the surface in these various young hearts, the sentiments, ideas, and progress of which were expressed by phrases that were almost allegorical, by mischievous glances, by gestures, by silence even, more intelligible than words. As soon as Madame Servin entered the studio, her eyes turned to the door near which Ginevra was seated. Under present circumstances the fact of this glance was not lost. Though at first none of the pupils took notice of it, Mademoiselle Thirion recollected it later, and it explained to her the doubt, fear, and mystery which now gave something wild and frightened to Madame Servin's eyes.

"Mesdemoiselles," she said, "Monsieur Servin cannot come to-day."

Then she went round complimenting each young girl, receiving in return a volume of those feminine caresses which are given as much by the tones of the voice and by looks as by gestures. She presently reached Ginevra, under the influence of an uneasiness she tried in vain to disguise. They nodded to each other in a friendly way, but said nothing; one painted, the other stood looking at the painting. The breathing of the soldier in the closet could be distinctly heard, but Madame Servin appeared not to notice

it; her feigned ignorance was so obvious that Ginevra recognized it at once for wilful deafness. Presently the unknown man turned on his pallet.

The Italian then looked fixedly at Madame Servin, who said, without the slightest change of face: —

"Your copy is as fine as the original; if I had to choose between the two I should be puzzled."

"Monsieur Servin has not taken his wife into his confidence as to this mystery," thought Ginevra, who, after replying to the young wife's speech with a gentle smile of incredulity, began to hum a Corsican canzonetta to cover the noise that was made by the prisoner.

It was so unusual a thing to hear the studious Italian sing, that all the other young girls looked up at her in surprise. Later, this circumstance served as proof to the charitable suppositions of jealousy.

Madame Servin soon went away, and the session ended without farther events; Ginevra allowed her companions to depart, and seemed to intend to work later. But, unconsciously to herself, she betrayed her desire to be left alone by impatient glances, ill-disguised, at the pupils who were slow in leaving. Mademoiselle Thirion, a cruel enemy to the girl who excelled her in everything, guessed by the instinct of jealousy that her rival's industry hid some purpose. By dint of watching her she was struck by the attentive air with which Ginevra seemed to be listening to

sounds that no one else had heard. The expression of impatience she now detected in her companion's eyes was like a flash of light to her.

Amélie was the last of the pupils to leave the studio: from there she went down to Madame Servin's apartment and talked with her for a moment; then she pretended to have left her bag, ran softly back to the studio, and found Ginevra once more mounted on her frail scaffolding, and so absorbed in contemplation of an unknown object that she did not hear the slight noise of her companion's footsteps. It is true that. to use an expression of Walter Scott, Amélie stepped as if on eggs. She hastily withdrew outside the door and coughed. Ginevra quivered, turned her head, saw her enemy, blushed, hastened to alter the shade to give meaning to her position, and came down from her perch leisurely. She soon after left the studio, bearing with her, in her memory, the image of a man's head, as beauteous as that of the Endymion, a masterpiece of Girodet's which she had lately copied.

"To banish so young a man! Who can he be? for he is not Marshal Ney—"

These two sentences are the simplest expression of the many ideas that Ginevra turned over in her mind for two days. On the third day, in spite of her haste to be first at the studio, she found Mademoiselle Thirion already there, having come in a carriage. Ginevra and her enemy observed each other for a long time, but they made their faces impenetrable. Amélie had seen the handsome head of the mysterious man, but, fortunately, and unfortunately also, the Imperial eagles and uniform were so placed that she did not see them through the crevice in the partition. She was lost in conjectures. Suddenly Servin came in, much earlier than usual.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he said, after glancing round the studio, "why have you placed yourself there? The light is bad. Come nearer to the rest of the young ladies and pull down that curtain a little."

Then he sat down near Laure, whose work deserved his most cordial correction.

"Well, well!" he cried; "here, indeed, is a head extremely well done. You'll be another Ginevra."

The master then went from easel to easel, scolding, flattering, jesting, and making, as usual, his jests more dreaded than his reprimands. Ginevra had not obeyed the professor's order, but remained at her post, firmly resolved not to quit it. She took a sheet of paper and began to sketch in sepia the head of the hidden man. A work done under the impulse of an emotion has always a stamp of its own. The faculty of giving to representations of nature or of thought their true coloring constitutes genius, and often, in this respect, passion takes the place of it. So, under

the circumstances in which Ginevra now found herself, the intuition which she owed to a powerful effect upon her memory, or, possibly, to necessity, that mother of great things, lent her, for the moment, a supernatural talent. The head of the young officer was dashed uponthe paper in the midst of an inward trembling which she mistook for fear, and in which a physiologist would have recognized the fire of inspiration. From time to time she glanced furtively at her companions, in order to hide the sketch if any of them came near But in spite of her watchfulness, there was a moment when she did not see the eyeglass of the pitiless Amélie turned full upon the drawing from the shelter of a great portfolio. Mademoiselle Thirion, recognizing the portrait of the mysterious man, showed herself abruptly, and Ginevra hastily covered the sheet of paper.

"Why do you stay there in spite of my advice, mademoiselle?" asked the professor, gravely.

The pupil turned her easel so that no one but the master could see the sketch, which she placed upon it, and said, in an agitated voice:—

"Do you not think, as I do, that the light is very good? Had I not better remain here?"

Servin turned pale. As nothing escapes the piercing eyes of malice, Mademoiselle Thirion became, as it were, a sharer in the sudden emotion of master and pupil.

"You are right," said Servin; "but really," he added, with a forced laugh, "you will soon come to know more than I do."

A pause followed, during which the professor studied the drawing of the officer's head.

"It is a masterpiece! worthy of Salvator Rosa!" he exclaimed, with the energy of an artist.

All the pupils rose on hearing this, and Mademoiselle Thirion darted forward with the velocity of a tiger on its prey. At this instant, the prisoner, awakened, perhaps, by the noise, began to move. Ginevra knocked over her stool, said a few incoherent sentences, and began to laugh; but she had thrown the portrait into her portfolio before Amélie could get to her. The easel was now surrounded: Servin descanted on the beauty of the copy which his favorite pupil was then making, and the whole class was duped by this stratagem, except Amélie, who, slipping behind her companions, attempted to open the portfolio where she had seen Ginevra throw the sketch. But the latter took it up without a word, and placed it in front of her. The two young girls then looked at each other fixedly, in silence.

"Come, mesdemoiselles, take your places," said Servin. "If you wish to do as well as Mademoiselle di Piombo, you must n't be always talking fashions and balls, and trifling away your time as you do." When they were all reseated before their easels, Servin sat down beside Ginevra.

"Was it not better that I should be the one to discover the mystery rather than the others?" asked the girl, in a low voice.

"Yes," replied the painter, "you are one of us, a patriot; but even if you were not, I should still have confided the matter to you."

Master and pupil understood each other, and Ginevra no longer feared to ask:—

"Who is he?"

"An intimate friend of Labédoyère, who contributed more than any other man, except the unfortunate colonel, to the union of the 7th regiment with the grenadiers of Elba. He was a major in the Imperia! guard and was at Waterloo."

"Why not have burned his uniform and shako, and supplied him with citizen's clothes?" said Ginevra, impatiently.

"He will have them to-night."

"You ought to have closed the studio for some days."

"He is going away."

"Then they'll kill him," said the girl. "Let him stay here with you till the present storm is over. Paris is still the only place in France where a man can be hidden safely. Is he a friend of yours?" she asked:

"No; he has no claim upon me but that of his ill-luck. He came into my hands in this way. My father-in-law, who returned to the army during the campaign, met this young fellow, and very cleverly rescued him from the claws of those who captured Labédoyère. He came here to defend the general, foolish fellow!"

"Do you call him that!" cried Ginevra, casting a glance of astonishment on the painter, who was silent for a moment.

"My father-in-law is too closely watched to be able to keep him in his own house," he resumed. "So he brought him to me, by night, about a week ago. I hoped to keep him out of sight in this corner, the only spot in the house where he could be safe."

"If I can be useful to you, employ me," said Ginevra. "I know the Maréchal de Feltre."

"Well, we'll see," replied the painter.

This conversation lasted too long not to be noticed by all the other girls. Servin left Ginevra, went round once more to each easel, and gave such long lessons that he was still there at the hour when the pupils were in the habit of leaving.

"You are forgetting your bag, Mademoiselle Thirion," said the professor, running after the girl, who was now condescending to the work of a spy to satisfy her jealousy.

The baffled pupil returned for the bag, expressing surprise at her carelessness; but this act of Servin's was to her fresh proof of the existence of a mystery, the importance of which was evident. She now ran noisily down the staircase, and slammed the door which opened into the Servins' apartment, to give an impression that she had gone; then she softly returned and stationed herself outside the door of the studio.

TTT.

LABÉDOYÈRE'S FRIEND.

When the painter and Ginevra thought themselves alone, Servin rapped in a peculiar manner on the door of the dark garret, which turned at once on its rusty and creaking hinges. Ginevra then saw a tall and well-made young man, whose Imperial uniform set her heart to beating. The officer had one arm in a sling, and the pallor of his face revealed sharp suffering. Seeing an unknown woman, he recoiled.

Amélie, who was unable to look into the room, the door being closed, was afraid to stay longer; she was satisfied with having heard the opening of the garret door, and departed noiselessly.

"Fear nothing," said the painter to the officer. "Mademoiselle is the daughter of a most faithful friend of the Emperor, the Baron di Piombo."

The young soldier retained no doubts as to Ginevra's patriotism as soon as he saw her.

"You are wounded," she said.

"Oh! it is nothing, mademoiselle," he replied; "the wound is healing."

Just at this moment the loud cries of the vendors of newspapers came up from the street: "Condemned to death!" They all trembled, and the soldier was the first to hear a name that turned him pale.

"Labédoyère!" he cried, falling on a stool.

They looked at each other in silence. Drops gathered on the livid forehead of the young man; he seized the black tufts of his hair in one hand with a gesture of despair, and rested his elbow on Ginevra's easel.

"After all," he said, rising abruptly, "Labédoyère and I knew what we were doing. We were certain of the fate that awaited us, whether from triumph or defeat. He dies for the Cause, and here am I, hiding myself!"

He rushed toward the door of the studio; but, quicker than he, Ginevra reached it, and barred his way.

"Can you restore the Emperor?" she said. "Do you expect to raise that giant who could not maintain himself?"

"But what can I do?" said the young man, addressing the two friends whom chance had sent to him. "I have not a relation in the world. Labédoyère was my protector and my friend; without him, I am alone. To-morrow I myself may be condemned; my only fortune was my pay. I spent my last penny to come here and try to snatch Labédoyère from his fate; death is,

therefore, a necessity for me. When a man decides to die he ought to know how to sell his life to the executioner. I was thinking just now that the life of an honest man is worth that of two traitors, and the blow of a dagger well placed may give immortality."

This spasm of despair alarmed the painter, and even Ginevra, whose own nature comprehended that of the young man. She admired his handsome face and his delightful voice, the sweetness of which was scarcely lessened by its tones of fury. Then, all of a sudden, she poured a balm upon the wounds of the unfortunate man:—

"Monsieur," she said, "as for your pecuniary distress, permit me to offer you my savings. My father is rich; I am his only child; he loves me, and I am sure he will never blame me. Have no scruple in accepting my offer; our property is derived from the Emperor; we do not own a penny that is not the result of his munificence. Is it not gratitude to him to assist his faithful soldiers? Take the sums you need as indifferently as I offer them. It is only money!" she added, in a tone of contempt. "Now, as for friends,—those you shall have."

She raised her head proudly, and her eyes shone with dazzling brilliancy.

"The head which falls to-morrow before a dozen muskets will save yours," she went on. "Wait till

the storm is over; you can then escape and take service in foreign countries if you are not forgotten here; or in the French army, if you are."

In the comfort that women give there is always a delicacy which has something maternal, foreseeing, and complete about it. But when the words of hope and peace are said with grace of gesture and that eloquence of tone which comes from the heart, and when, above all, the benefactress is beautiful, a young man does not resist. The prisoner breathed in love through all his senses. A rosy tinge colored his white cheeks; his eyes lost something of the sadness that dulled them, and he said, in a peculiar tone of voice:—

"You are an angel of goodness — But Labédoyère!" he added. "Oh, Labédoyère!"

At this cry they all three looked at one another in silence, each comprehending the others' thoughts. No longer friends of twenty minutes only, they were friends of (wenty years.

"Dear friend," said Servin, "can you save him?"
"I can avenge him."

Ginevra quivered. Though the stranger was handsome, his appearance had not influenced her; the soft pity in a woman's heart for miseries that are not ignoble had stifled in Ginevra all other emotions; but to hear a cry of vengeance, to find in that proscribed being an Italian soul, devotion to Napoleon, Corsican generosity! — ah! that was, indeed, too much for her. She looked at the officer with a respectful emotion which shook his heart. For the first time in her life a man had caused her a keen emotion. She now, like other women, put the soul of the stranger on a par with the noble beauty of his features and the happy proportions of his figure, which she admired as an artist. Led by accidental curiosity to pity, from pity to a powerful interest, she came, through that interest, to such profound sensations that she felt she was in danger-if she stayed there longer.

"Until to-morrow, then," she said, giving the officer a gentle smile by way of a parting consolation.

Seeing that smile, which threw a new light on Ginevra's features, the stranger forgot all else for an instant.

"To-morrow," he said, sadly; "but to-morrow, Labédoyère—"

Ginevra turned, put a finger on her lips, and looked at him, as if to say: "Be calm, be prudent."

And the young man cried out in his own language:

"Ah, Dio! che non vorrei vivere dopo averla veduta?

— who would not wish to live after seeing her?"

The peculiar accent with which he pronounced the words made Ginevra quiver.

"Are you Corsican?" she cried, returning toward him with a beating heart.

"I was born in Corsica," he replied; "but I was brought, while very young, to Genoa, and as soon as I was old enough for military service I enlisted."

The beauty of the young man, the mighty charm lent to him by his attachment to the Emperor, his wound, his misfortunes, his danger, all disappeared to Ginevra's mind, or, rather, all were blended in one sentiment, — a new and delightful sentiment. This persecuted man was a child of Corsica; he spoke its cherished language! She stood, for a moment, motionless; held by a magical sensation; before her eyes was a living picture, to which all human sentiments, united by chance, gave vivid colors. By Servin's invitation, the officer had seated himself upon a divan, and the painter, after removing the sling which supported the arm of his guest, was undoing the bandages in order to dress the wound. Ginevra shuddered when she saw the long, broad gash made by the blade of a sabre on the young man's forearm, and a moan escaped her. The stranger raised his head and smiled to her. There was something touching which went to the soul, in the care with which Servin lifted the lint and touched the lacerated flesh, while the face of the wounded man, though pale and sickly, expressed, as he looked at the girl, more pleasure than suffering. An artist would have admired, involuntarily, this opposition of sentiments, together with the contrasts produced by the

whiteness of the linen and the bared arm to the red and blue uniform of the officer.

At this moment a soft half-light pervaded the studio; but a parting ray of the evening sunlight suddenly illuminated the spot where the soldier sat, so that his noble, blanched face, his black hair, and his clothes were bathed in its glow. The effect was simple enough, but to the girl's Italian imagination it was a happy omen. The stranger seemed to her a celestial messenger, speaking the language of her own country. He thus unconsciously put her under the spell of childhood's memories, while in her heart there dawned another feeling as fresh, as pure as her own innocence. For a short, very short moment, she was motionless and dreamy, as though she were plunged in boundless thought. Then she blushed at having allowed her absorption to be noticed, exchanged one soft and rapid glance with the wounded man, and fled with the vision of him still before her eyes.

The next day was not a class-day, but Ginevra came to the studio, and the prisoner was free to sit beside her easel. Servin, who had a sketch to finish, played the part of mentor to the two young people, who talked to each other chiefly in Corsican. The soldier related the sufferings of the retreat from Moscow; for, at nineteen years of age, he had made the passage of the Beresina, and was almost the last man left of his

regiment. He described, in words of fire, the great disaster of Waterloo. His voice was music itself to the Italian girl. Brought up as a Corsican, Ginevra was, in some sense, a child of Nature: falseness was a thing unknown to her; she gave herself up without reserve to her impressions; she acknowledged them, or, rather, allowed them to be seen without the affectations of petty and calculating coquetry, characteristic of Parisian girlhood. During this day she sat more than once with her palette in one hand, her brushes in another, without touching a color. With her eyes fastened on the officer, and her lips slightly apart, she listened, in the attitude of painting a stroke which was never painted. She was not surprised to see such softness in the eyes of the young man, for she felt that her own were soft in spite of her will to keep them stern and calm. After periods like this she painted diligently, without raising her head, for he was there, near her, watching her work. The first time he sat down beside her to contemplate her silently, she said, in a voice of some emotion, after a long pause: -

"Does it amuse you to see me paint?"

That day she learned that his name was Luigi. Before separating, it was agreed between them that if, on class-days when they could not see each other, any important political event occurred, Ginevra was to in-

form him by singing certain Corsican melodies then agreed upon.

The following day Mademoiselle Thirion informed all the members of the class, under pledge of secrecy that Ginevra di Piombo had a lover, a young man who came during the hours for the lesson, and concealed himself in the garret beyond the studio.

"You, who take her part," she said to Mademoiselle Roguin, "watch her carefully, and you will see how she spends her time."

Ginevra was, therefore, observed with diabolical attention. They listened to her songs, they watched her glances. At times, when she supposed that no one saw her, a dozen pairs of eyes were furtively upon her. Thus enlightened, the girls were able to interpret truly the emotions that crossed the features of the beautiful Italian,— her gestures, the peculiar tones in which she hummed a tune, and the attention with which they saw her listen to sounds which only she could hear through the partition.

By the end of a week, Laure was the only one of Servin's fifteen pupils who had resisted the temptation of looking at Luigi through the crevice of the partition; and she, through an instinct of weakness, still defended her beautiful friend. Mademoiselle Roguin endeavored to make her wait on the staircase after the class dispersed, that she might prove to her the inti-

macy of Ginevra and the young man by entering the studio and surprising them together. But Laure refused to condescend to an act of espial which no curiosity could justify, and she consequently became the object of much reprobation.

Before long Mademoiselle Thirion made known that she thought it improper to attend the classes of a painter whose opinions were tainted with patriotism and Bonapartism (in those days the terms were synonymous), and she ceased her attendance at the studio. But, although she herself forgot Ginevra, the harm she had planted bore fruit. Little by little, the other young girls revealed to their mothers the strange events which were happening at the studio. One day Matilde Roguin did not come; the next day another girl was missing, and so on, till the last three or four who were left came no more. Ginevra and Laure, her little friend, were the sole occupants of the deserted studio for three or four days.

Ginevra did not observe this falling off, nor ask the cause of her companions' absence. As soon as she had invented means of communication with Luigi she lived in the studio in a delightful solitude, alone amid her own world, thinking only of the officer and the dangers that threatened him. Though a sincere admirer of noble characters that never betray their political faiths, she nevertheless urged Luigi to submit

himself to the royal authority, that he might be released from his present life and remain in France. But to this he would not consent. If passions are born and nourished, as they say, under the influence of romantic causes, never did so many circumstances of that kind concur in uniting two young souls by one and the same sentiment. The friendship of Ginevra for Luigi and that of Luigi for Ginevra made more progress in a month than a friendship in society would make in ten years. Adversity is the touchstone of character. Ginevra was able, therefore, to study Luigi, to know him; and before long they mutually esteemed each other. The girl, who was older than Luigi, found a charm in being courted by a youth already so grand so tried by fate, - a youth who joined to the experience of a man the graces of adolescence. Luigi, on his side, felt an unspeakable pleasure in allowing himself to be apparently protected by a woman, now twentyfive years of age. Was it not a proof of love? The union of gentleness and pride, strength and weakness in Ginevra were, to him, irresistible attractions, and he was utterly subjugated by her. In short, before long, they loved so profoundly that they felt no need of denying to each other their love, nor yet of telling it.

One day, towards evening, Ginevra heard the accustomed signal. Luigi scratched with a pin on the woodwork in a manner that produced no more noise than a

spider might make as he fastened his thread. The signal meant that he wished to come out of his retreat.

Ginevra glanced around the studio, and not seeing Laure, opened the door; but as she did so Luigi caught sight of the little pupil and abruptly retired. Surprised at his action, Ginevra looked round, saw Laure, and said, as she went up to the girl's easel:—

"You are staying late, my dear. That head seems to me finished; you only want a high-light, — see! on that knot of hair."

"You would do me a great kindness," said Laure, in a trembling voice, "if you would give this copy a few touches; for then I could carry away with me something to remind me of you."

"Willingly," said Ginevra, painting a few strokes on the picture. "But I thought it was a long way from your home to the studio, and it is late."

"Oh! Ginevra, I am going away, never to return," cried the poor girl, sadly.

"You mean to leave Monsieur Servin!" exclaimed Ginevra, less affected, however, by this news than she would have been a month earlier.

"Have n't you noticed, Ginevra, that for some days past you and I have been alone in the studio?"

"True," said Ginevra, as if struck by a sudden recollection. "Are all those young ladies ill, or going to be married, or are their fathers on duty at court?"

- "They have left Monsieur Servin," replied Laure.
- "Why?"
- "On your account, Ginevra."
- "My account!" repeated the Corsican, springing up, with a threatening brow and her eyes flashing.

"Oh! don't be angry, my kind Ginevra," cried Laure, in deep distress. "My mother insists on my leaving the studio. The young ladies say that you have some intrigue, and that Monsieur Servin allows the young man whom you love to stay in the dark attic. I have never believed these calumnies nor said a word to my mother about them. But last night Madame Roguin met her at a ball and asked her if she still sent me here. When my mother answered yes, Madame Roguin told her the falsehoods of those young ladies. Mamma scolded me severely; she said I must have known it all, and that I had failed in proper confidence between mother and daughter by not telling her. Oh! my dear Ginevra! I, who took you for my model, oh! how grieved I am that I can't be your companion any longer."

- "We shall meet again in life; girls marry—" said Ginevra.
 - "When they are rich," sighed Laure.
 - "Come and see me; my father has a fortune —"
- "Ginevra," continued Laure, tenderly. "Madame Roguin and my mother are coming to see Monsieur

Servin to-morrow and reproach him; had n't you better warn him."

A thunderbolt falling at Ginevra's feet could not have astonished her more than this revelation.

- "What matter is it to them?" she asked, naïvely.
- "Everybody thinks it very wrong. Mamma says it is immoral."
 - "And you, Laure, what do you say?"

The young girl looked up at Ginevra, and their thoughts united. Laure could no longer keep back her tears; she flung herself on her friend's breast and sobbed. At this moment Servin came into the studio.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," he cried, with enthusiasm, "I have finished my picture! it is now being varnished. What have you been doing, meanwhile? Where are the young ladies; are they taking a holiday, or are they in the country?"

Laure dried her tears, bowed to Monsieur Servin,. and went away.

"The studio has been deserted for some days," replied Ginevra, "and the young ladies are not coming back."

"Pooh!"

"Oh! don't laugh," said Ginevra. "Listen: I am the involuntary cause of the loss of your reputation—"

The artist smiled, and said, interrupting his pupil:—

"My reputation? Why, in a few days my picture will make it at the Exposition."

"That relates to your talent," replied the girl. "I am speaking of your morality. Those young ladies have told their mothers that Luigi was shut up here, and that you lent yourself — to — our love."

"There is some truth in that, mademoiselle," replied the professor. "The mothers of those young ladies are foolish women; if they had come straight to me I should have explained the matter. But I don't care a straw about it! Life is short, anyhow."

And the painter snapped his fingers above his head. Luigi, who had heard part of the conversation, came in.

"You have lost all your scholars," he cried. "I have ruined you!"

The artist took Luigi's hand and that of Ginevra, and joined them.

"Marry one another, my children," he said, with fatherly kindness.

They both dropped their eyes, and their silence was the first avowal they had made to each other of their love.

"You will surely be happy," said Servin. "There is nothing in life to equal the happiness of two beings like yourselves when bound together in love?"

Luigi pressed the hand of his protector without at

first being able to utter a word; but presently he said, in a voice of emotion: —

"To you I owe it all."

"Be happy! I bless and wed you," said the painter, with comic unction, laying his hands upon the heads of the lovers.

This little jest put an end to their strained emotion. All three looked at one another and laughed merrily. Ginevra pressed Luigi's hand in a strong clasp, with a simplicity of action worthy of the customs of her native land.

"Ah ça, my dear children," resumed Servin, "you think that all will go right now, but you are much mistaken."

The lovers looked at him in astonishment.

"Don't be anxious. I'm the only one that your romance will harm. But the fact is, Madame Servin is a little straitlaced; and I don't really see how we are to settle it with her."

"Heavens! and I forgot to tell you," exclaimed Ginevra, "that Madame Roguin and Laure's mother are coming here to-morrow to—"

"I understand," said the painter.

"But you can easily justify yourself," continued the girl, with a proud movement of her head. "Monsieur Luigi," she added, turning to him with an arch look, "will no longer object to entering the royal service. Well, then," after receiving a smile from the young man, "to-morrow morning I will send a petition to one of the most influential persons at the ministry of War, —a man who will refuse nothing to the daughter of the Baron di Piombo. We shall obtain a tacit pardon for Captain Luigi, for, of course, they will not allow him the rank of major. And then," she added, addressing Servin, "you can confound the mothers of my charitable companions by telling them the truth."

"You are an angel!" cried Servin.

While this scene was passing at the studio the father and mother of Ginevra were becoming impatient at her non-return.

"It is six o'clock, and Ginevra not yet home!" cried Bartolomeo.

"She was never so late before," said his wife.

The two old people looked at each other with an anxiety that was not usual with them. Too anxious to remain in one place, Bartolomeo rose and walked about the salon with an active step for a man who was over seventy-seven years of age. Thanks to his robust constitution, he had changed but little since the day of his arrival in Paris, and, despite his tall figure, he walked erect. His hair, now white and sparse, left uncovered a broad and protuberant skull, which gave a strong idea of his character and firmness. His face,

seamed with deep wrinkles, had taken, with age, a nobler expression, preserving the pallid tones which inspire veneration. The ardor of passions still lived in the fire of his eyes, while the eyebrows, which were not wholly whitened, retained their terrible mobility. The aspect of the head was stern, but it conveyed the impression that Piombo had a right to be so. His kindness, his gentleness were known only to his wife and daughter. In his functions, or in presence of strangers, he never laid aside the majesty that time had impressed upon his person; and the habit of frowning with his heavy eyebrows, contracting the wrinkles of his face, and giving to his eyes a Napoleonic fixity, made his manner of accosting others icy.

During the course of his political life he had been so generally feared that he was thought unsocial, and it is not difficult to explain the causes of that opinion. The life, morals, and fidelity of Piombo made him obnoxious to most courtiers. In spite of the fact that delicate missions were constantly intrusted to his discretion which to any other man about the court would have proved lucrative, he possessed an income of not more than thirty thousand francs from an investment on the Grand Livre. If we recall the cheapness of government securities under the Empire, and the liberality of Napoleon toward those of his faithful servants who knew how to ask for it, we can readily

see that the Baron di Piombo must have been a man of stern integrity. He owed his plumage as baron to the necessity Napoleon felt of giving him a title before sending him on missions to foreign courts.

Bartolomeo had always professed a hatred to the traitors with whom Napoleon surrounded himself, expecting to bind them to his cause by dint of victories. It was he of whom it is told that he made three steps to the door of the Emperor's cabinet after advising him to get rid of three men in France on the eve of Napoleon's departure for his celebrated and admirable campaign of 1814. After the second return of the Bourbons Bartolomeo ceased to wear the decoration of the Legion of honor. No man offered a finer image of those old Republicans, incorruptible friends to the Empire, who remained the living relics of the two most energetic governments the world has ever seen. Though the Baron di Piombo displeased mere courtiers, he had the Darus, Drouots, and Carnots with him as friends. As for the rest of the politicians, he cared not a whiff of his cigar's smoke for them, especially since Waterloo.

Bartolomeo di Piombo had bought, for the very moderate sum which Madame Mère, the Emperor's mother, had paid him for his estates in Corsica, the old mansion of the Portenduère family, in which he had made no changes. Lodged, usually, at the cost of

the government, he did not occupy this house until after the catastrophe of Fontainebleau. Following the habits of simple persons of strict virtue, the baron and his wife gave no heed to external splendor; their furniture was that which they bought with the mansion. The grand apartments, lofty, sombre, and bare, the wide mirrors in gilded frames that were almost black, the furniture of the period of Louis XIV. were in keeping with Bartolomeo and his wife, personages worthy of antiquity.

Under the Empire, and during the Hundred Days, while exercising functions that were liberally rewarded, the old Corsican had maintained a great establishment, more for the purpose of doing honor to his office than from any desire to shine himself. His life and that of his wife were so frugal, so tranquil, that their modest fortune sufficed for all their wants. To them, their daughter Ginevra was more precious than the wealth of the whole world. When, therefore, in May, 1814, the Baron di Piombo resigned his office, dismissed his crowd of servants, and closed his stable door, Ginevra, simple and unpretending like her parents, saw nothing to regret in the change. Like all great souls, she found her luxury in strength of feeling, and derived her happiness from quietness and work. These three beings loved each other too well for the externals of existence to be of value in their eyes.

Often, and especially after the second dreadful fall of Napoleon, Bartolomeo and his wife passed delightful evenings alone with their daughter, listening while she sang and played. To them there was a vast secret pleasure in the presence, in the slightest word of that child; their eyes followed her with tender anxiety; they heard her step in the court-yard, lightly as she trod. Like lovers, the three would often sit silently together, understanding thus, better than by speech, the eloquence of their souls. This profound sentiment, the life itself of the two old people, animated their every thought. Here were not three existences, but one, - one only, which, like the flame on the hearth, divided itself into three tongues of fire. occasionally, some memory of Napoleon's benefits and misfortunes, if the public events of the moment distracted the minds of the old people from this source of their constant solicitude, they could always talk of those interests without affecting their community of thought, for Ginevra shared their political passions. What more natural, therefore, than the ardor with which they found a refuge in the heart of their only child?

Until now the occupations of public life had absorbed the energy of the Baron di Piombo; but after leaving those employments he felt the need of casting that energy into the last sentiment that remained to him. Apart from the ties of parentage, there may have been, unknown to these three despotic souls, another powerful reason for the intensity of their reciprocal love: it was love undivided. Ginevra's whole heart belonged to her father, as Piombo's whole heart belonged to his child; and if it be true that we are bound to one another more by our defects than by our virtues, Ginevra echoed in a marvellous manner the passions of her father. There lay the sole imperfection of this triple life. Ginevra was born unyielding of will, vindictive, and passionate, like her father in his youth.

The Corsican had taken pleasure in developing these savage sentiments in the heart of his daughter, precisely as a lion teaches the lion-cubs to spring upon their prey. But this apprenticeship to vengeance having no means of action in their family life, it came to pass that Ginevra turned the principle against her father; as a child she forgave him nothing, and he was forced to yield to her. Piombo saw nothing more than childish nonsense in these fictitious quarrels, but the child was all the while acquiring a habit of ruling her parents. In the midst, however, of the tempests which the father was fond of exciting, a look, a word of tenderness, sufficed to pacify their angry souls, and often they were never so near to a kiss as when they were threatening each other vehemently.

Nevertheless, for the last five years, Ginevra, grown wiser than her father, avoided such scenes. Her faithfulness, her devotion, the love which filled her every thought, and her admirable good sense had got the better of her temper. And yet, for all that, a very great evil had resulted from her training; Ginevra lived with her father and mother on the footing of an equality which is always dangerous.

Piombo and his wife, persons without education, had allowed Ginevra to study as she pleased. Following her caprices as a young girl, she had studied all things for a time, and then abandoned them, — taking up and leaving each train of thought at will, until, at last, painting had proved to be her dominant passion. Ginevra would have made a noble woman had her mother been capable of guiding her studies, of enlightening her mind, and bringing into harmony her gifts of nature; her defects came from the fatal education which the old Corsican had found delight in giving her.

After marching up and down the room for some time, Piombo rang the bell; a servant entered.

"Go and meet Mademoiselle Ginevra," said his master.

"I always regret our carriage on her account," remarked the baroness

"She said she did not want one," replied Piombo,

looking at his wife, who, accustomed for forty years to habits of obedience, lowered her eyes and said no more.

Already a septuagenarian, tall, withered, pale, and wrinkled, the baroness exactly resembled those old women whom Schnetz puts into the Italian scenes of his genre pictures. She was so habitually silent that she might have been taken for another Mrs. Shandy: but, occasionally, a word, look, or gesture betraved that her feelings still retained all the vigor and the freshness of their youth. Her dress, devoid of coquetry, was often in bad taste. She usually sat passive, buried in a low sofa, like a Sultana Valide, awaiting or admiring her Ginevra, her pride, her life. The beauty, toilet, and grace of her daughter seemed to have become her own. All was well with her if Ginevra was happy. Her hair was white, and a few strands only were seen above her white and wrinkled forehead, or beside her hollow cheeks.

"It is now fifteen days," she said, "since Ginevra has made a practice of being late."

"Jean is so slow!" cried the impatient old man, buttoning up his blue coat and seizing his hat, which he dashed upon his head as he took his cane and departed.

"You will not get far," said his wife, calling after him.

As she spoke, the *porte-cochère* was opened and shut, and the old mother heard the steps of her Ginevra in the court-yard. Bartolomeo almost instantly reappeared, carrying his daughter, who struggled in his arms.

IV.

LOVE.

"HERE she is, my Ginevra, Ginevrettina, Ginevrola, mia Ginevra bella!" cried the old man.

"Oh, father, you hurt me!"

Instantly Ginevra was put down with an air of respect. She nodded her head with a graceful movement at her mother, who was frightened by her cry, as if to say, "Don't be alarmed, it was only a trick to get away."

The pale, wan face of the baroness recovered its usual tones, and even assumed a look of gayety. Piombo rubbed his hands violently, — with him the surest symptom of joy; he had taken to this habit at court when he saw Napoleon becoming angry with those of his generals and ministers who served him ill or committed blunders. When, as now, the muscles of his face relaxed, every wrinkle on his forehead expressed benevolence. These two old people presented at this moment precisely the aspect of a drooping plant to which a little water has given fresh life after long dryness.

- "Now, to dinner! to dinner!" cried the baron, offering his large hand to his daughter, whom he called "Signora Piombellina," another symptom of gayety, to which Ginevra replied by a smile.
- "Ah ça!" said Piombo, as they left the table, "your mother has called my attention to the fact that for some weeks you have stayed much longer than usual at the studio. It seems that painting is more to you than your parents—"
 - "Oh, father!"
- "Ginevra is preparing some surprise for us, I think," said the mother.
- "A picture of your own! will you bring us that?" cried the Corsican, clapping his hands.
- "Yes, I am very much occupied at the studio," replied Ginevra, rather slowly.
- "What is the matter, Ginevra? You are turning pale!" cried her mother.
- "No!" exclaimed the young girl in a tone of resolution, "no! it shall never be said that Ginevra Piombo acted a lie."

Hearing this singular exclamation, Piombo and his wife looked at their daughter in astonishment.

"I love a young man," she added, in a voice of emotion.

Then, not venturing to look at her parents, she lowered her large eyelids as if to veil the fire of her eyes. "Is he a prince?" asked her father, ironically, in a tone of voice which made the mother quail.

"No, father," she said, gently, "he is a young man without fortune."

"Is he very handsome?"

"He is very unfortunate."

"What is he?"

"Labédoyère's comrade; he was proscribed, without a refuge; Servin concealed him, and —"

"Servin is a good fellow, who has done well," cried Piombo; "but you, my daughter, you do wrong to love any man, except your father."

"It does not depend on me to love, or not to love," replied Ginevra, still gently.

"I flattered myself," continued her father, "that my Ginevra would be faithful to me until I died; and that my love and that of her mother would suffice her till then; I did not expect that our tenderness would find a rival in her soul, and —"

"Did I ever reproach you for your fanaticism for Napoleon?" said Ginevra. "Have you never loved any one but me? Did you not leave me for months together when you went on missions. I bore your absence courageously. Life has necessities to which we must all submit."

"Ginevra!"

"No, you don't love me for myself; your reproaches betray your intolerable egotism."

"You dare to blame your father's love!" exclaimed Piombo, his eyes flashing.

"Father, I don't blame you," replied Ginevra, with more gentleness than her trembling mother expected. "You have grounds for your egotism, as I have for my love. Heaven is my witness that no girl has ever fulfilled her duty to her parents better than I have done to you. I have never felt anything but love and happiness where others often see obligation. It is now fifteen years that I have never left your protecting wing, and it has been a most dear pleasure to me to charm your life. But am I ungrateful for all this in giving myself up to the joy of loving; is it ingratitude to desire a husband who will protect me hereafter?"

"What! do you reckon benefits with your father, Ginevra?" said Piombo, in a dangerous tone.

A dreadful pause then followed, during which no one dared to speak. Bartolomeo at last broke the silence by crying out in a heart-rending tone:—

"Oh! stay with us! stay with your father, your old father! I cannot have you love another man. Ginevra, you will not have long to await your liberty."

"But, father, remember that I need not leave you; we shall be two to love you; you will learn to know the man to whose care you bequeath me. You will be doubly cherished by me and by him, — by him who is my other self, by me who am all his."

"Oh! Ginevra, Ginevra!" cried the Corsican, clenching his fists; "why did you not marry when Napoleon brought me to accept the idea? Why did you not take the counts and dukes he presented to you?"

"They loved me to order," said the girl. "Besides, they would have made me live with them, and I did not wish to leave you alone."

"You don't wish to leave me alone," said Piombo, "and yet you marry! — that is leaving me alone. I know you, my daughter; in that case, you would cease to love us. Élisa," he added, looking at his wife, who remained motionless, and as if stupefied, "we have no longer a daughter; she wishes to marry."

The old man sat down, after raising his hands to heaven with a gesture of invoking the Divine power; then he bowed himself over as if weighed down with sorrow.

Ginevra saw his agitation, and the restraint which he put upon his anger touched her to the heart; she expected some violent crisis, some ungovernable fury; she had not armed her soul against paternal gentleness.

"Father," she said, in a tender voice, "no, you shall never be abandoned by your Ginevra. But love her a little for her own sake. If you knew how he loves me! Ah! he would never make me unhappy!"

"Comparisons already!" cried Piombo, in a terrible voice. "No, I can never endure the idea of your

marriage. If he loved you as you deserve to be loved he would kill me; if he did not love you, I should put a dagger through him."

The hands of the old man trembled, his lips trembled, his body trembled, but his eyes flashed lightnings. Ginevra alone was able to endure his glance, for her eyes flamed also, and the daughter was worthy of the sire.

"Oh! to love you! What man is worthy of such a life?" continued Piombo. "To love you as a father is paradise on earth; who is there worthy to be your husband?"

- "He," said Ginevra; "he of whom I am not worthy."
- "He?" repeated Piombo, mechanically; "who is he?"
 - "He whom I love."
 - "How can he know you enough to love you?"
- "Father," said Ginevra, with a gesture of impatience, "whether he loves me or not, if I love him —"
 - "You love him?" cried Piombo.

Ginevra bent her head softly.

- "You love him more than you love us?"
- "The two feelings cannot be compared," she replied.
- "Is one stronger than the other?"
- "I think it is," said Ginevra.
- "You shall not marry him," cried the Corsican, his voice shaking the window-panes.

"I shall marry him," replied Ginevra, tranquilly.

"Oh, God!" cried the mother, "how will this quarrel end? Santa Virgina! place thyself between them!"

The baron, who had been striding up and down the room, now seated himself; an icy sternness darkened his face; he looked fixedly at his daughter, and said to her, in a gentle, weakened voice,—

"Ginevra, no! you will not marry him. Oh! say nothing more to-night—let me think the contrary. Do you wish to see your father on his knees, his white hairs prostrate before you? I supplicate you—"

"Ginevra Piombo does not pass her word and break it," she replied. "I am your daughter."

"She is right," said the baroness. "We are sent into the world to marry."

"Do you encourage her in disobedience?" said the baron to his wife, who, terrified by the word, now changed to marble.

"Refusing to obey an unjust order is not disobedience," said Ginevra.

"No order can be unjust from the lips of your father, my daughter. Why do you judge my action? The repugnance that I feel is counsel from on high, sent, it may be, to protect you from some great evil."

"The only evil could be that he did not love me."

"Always he!"

"Yes, always," she answered. "He is my life, my

good, my thought. Even if I obeyed you he would be ever in my soul. To forbid me to marry him is to make me hate you."

- "You love us not!" cried Piombo.
- "Oh!" said Ginevra, shaking her head.
- "Well, then, forget him; be faithful to us. After we are gone you understand?"
- "Father, do you wish me to long for your death?" cried Ginevra.
- "I shall outlive you. Children who do not honor their parents die early," said the father, driven to exasperation.
- "All the more reason why I should marry and be happy," she replied.

This coolness and power of argument increased Piombo's trouble; the blood rushed violently to his head, and his face turned purple. Ginevra shuddered; she sprang like a bird on her father's knee, threw her arms around his neck, and caressed his white hair, exclaiming, tenderly:—

- "Oh, yes, yes, let me die first! I could never survive you, my father, my kind father!"
- "Oh! my Ginevra, my own Ginevra!" replied Piombo, whose anger melted under this caress like snow beneath the rays of the sun.
- "It was time you ceased," said the baroness, in a trembling voice.

"Poor mother!"

"Ah! Ginevretta! mia bella Ginevra!"

And the father played with his daughter as though she were a child of six. He amused himself by releasing the waving volume of her hair, by dandling her on his knee; there was something of madness in these expressions of his love. Presently his daughter scolded while kissing him, and tried, by jesting, to obtain admission for Luigi; but her father, also jesting, refused. She sulked, then returned to coax once more, and sulked again, until, by the end of the evening, she was forced to be content with having impressed upon her father's mind both her love for Luigi and the idea of an approaching marriage.

The next day she said no more about her love; she was more caressing to her father than she had ever been, and testified the utmost gratitude, as if to thank him for the consent he seemed to have given by his silence. That evening she sang and played to him for a long time, exclaiming now and then: "We want a man's voice for this nocturne." Ginevra was an Italian, and that says all.

At the end of a week her mother signed to her. She went; and Elisa Piombo whispered in her ear:—

"I have persuaded your father to receive him."

"Oh! mother, how happy you have made me!"

That day Ginevra had the joy of coming home on

the arm of her Luigi. The officer came out of his hiding-place for the second time only. The earnest appeals which Ginevra made to the Duc de Feltre, then minister of war, had been crowned with complete success. Luigi's name was replaced upon the roll of officers awaiting orders. This was the first great step toward better things. Warned by Ginevra of the difficulties he would encounter with her father, the young man dared not express his fear of finding it impossible to please the old man. Courageous under adversity, brave on a battlefield, he trembled at the thought of entering Piombo's salon. Ginevra felt him tremble, and this emotion, the source of which lay in her, was, to her eyes, another proof of love.

"How pale you are!" she said to him when they reached the door of the house.

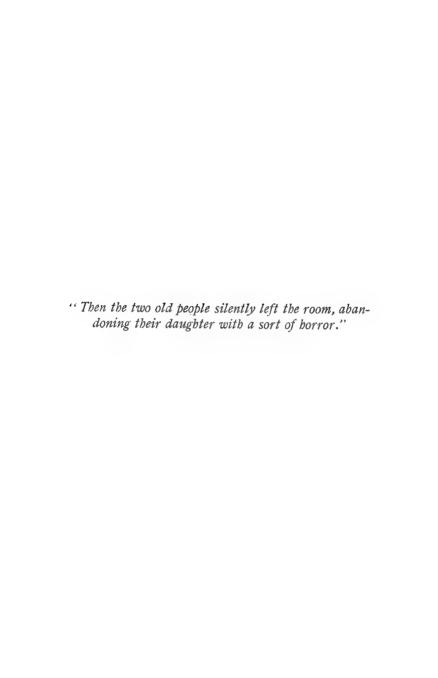
"Oh! Ginevra, if it concerned my life only! —"

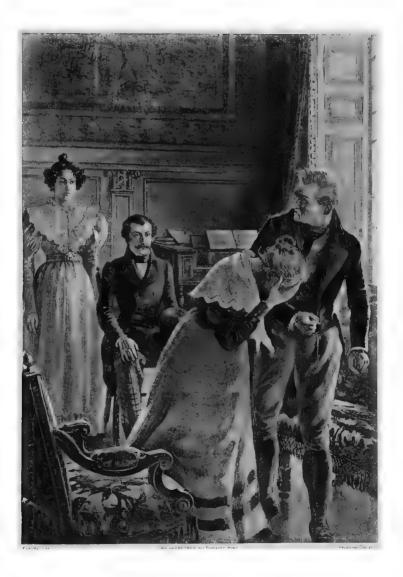
Though Bartolomeo had been notified by his wife of the formal presentation Ginevra was to make of her lover, he would not advance to meet him, but remained seated in his usual arm-chair, and the sternness of his brow was awful.

"Father," said Ginevra, "I bring you a person you will no doubt be pleased to see. — a soldier who fought beside the Emperor at Mont-Saint-Jean."

The baron rose, cast a sidelong glance on Luigi, and said, in a sardonic tone: —

[&]quot;Monsieur is not decorated."





"I no longer wear the Legion of honor," replied Luigi, timidly, still standing.

Ginevra, mortified by her father's incivility, dragged forward a chair. The officer's answer seemed to satisfy the old servant of Napoleon. Madame Piombo, observing that her husband's eyebrows were resuming their natural position, said, by way of conversation:

"Monsieur's resemblance to a person we knew in Corsica, Nina Porta, is really surprising."

"Nothing could be more natural," replied the young man, on whose face Piombo's flaming eyes now rested. "Nina was my sister."

"Are you Luigi Porta?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

Bartolomeo rose, tottered, was forced to lean against a chair and beckon to his wife. Elisa Piombo came to him. Then the two old people, silently, each supporting the other, left the room, abandoning their daughter with a sort of horror.

Luigi Porta, bewildered, looked at Ginevra, who had turned as white as a marble statue, and stood gazing at the door through which her father and mother had disappeared. This departure and this silence seemed to her so solemn that, for the first time in her whole life, a feeling of fear entered her soul. She struck her hands together with great force, and said, in a voice so shaken that none but a lover could have heard the words:—

- "What misery in a word!"
- "In the name of our love, what have I said?" asked Luigi Porta.
- "My father," she replied, "never spoke to me of our deplorable history, and I was too young when we left Corsica to know anything about it."
 - "Are we in rendetta?" asked Luigi, trembling.
- "Yes. I have heard my mother say that the Portas killed my brother and burned our house. My father then massacred the whole family. How is it that you survived?—for you were tied to the posts of the bed before they set fire to the house."
- "I do not know," replied Luigi. "I was taken to Genoa when six years old, and given in charge of an old man named Colonna. No detail about my family was told to me. I knew only that I was an orphan, and without property. Old Colonna was a father to me; and I bore his name until I entered the army. In order to do that, I had to show my certificate of birth in order to prove my identity. Colonna then told me, still a mere child, that I had enemies. And he advised me to take Luigi as my surname, and so evade them."
- "Go, go, Luigi!" cried Ginevra. "No, stay; I must go with you. So long as you are in my father's house you have nothing to fear; but the moment you leave it, take care! you will go from danger to danger. My father has two Corsicans in his service, and if he does not lie in wait to kill you, they will."

"Ginevra," he said, "this feud, does it exist between you and me?"

The girl smiled sadly and bowed her head. Presently she raised it, and said, with a sort of pride: —

"Oh, Luigi, our love must be pure and sincere, indeed, to give me strength to tread the path I am about to enter. But it involves a happiness that will last throughout our lives, will it not?"

Luigi answered by a smile, and pressed her hand. Ginevra comprehended that true love should despise all vulgar protestations at such a moment. This calm and restrained expression of his feelings foreshadowed, in some sense, their strength and their duration.

The destiny of the pair was then and there decided. Ginevra foresaw a cruel struggle, but the idea of abandoning Luigi — an idea which may have floated in her soul — vanished completely. His forever, she dragged him suddenly, with a sort of desperate energy, from her father's house, and did not leave him till she saw him reach the house where Servin had engaged a modest lodging.

By the time she reached home, Ginevra had attained to that serenity which is caused by a firm resolution; no sign in her manner betrayed uneasiness. She turned on her father and mother, whom she found in the act of sitting down to dinner, a glance of exceeding gentleness devoid of hardihood. She saw that

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her mother had been weeping; the redness of those withered eyelids shook her heart, but she hid her emotion. No one touched the dinner which was served to them. A horror of food is one of the chief symptoms which reveal a great crisis in life. All three rose from table without having addressed a single word to one another.

When Ginevra had placed herself between her father and mother in the great and gloomy salon, Piombo tried to speak, but his voice failed him; he tried to walk, but he had no strength in his legs. He returned to his seat and rang the bell.

"Pietro," he said, at last, to the footman, "light the fire; I am cold."

Ginevra trembled, and looked at her father anxiously. The struggle within him must have been horrible, for his face was distorted. Ginevra knew the extent of the peril before her, but she did not flinch. Bartolomeo, meanwhile, cast furtive glances at his daughter, as if he feared a character whose violence was the work of his own hands.

Between such natures all things must be extreme. The certainty of some impending change in the feelings of father and daughter gave to the worn and weary face of the baroness an expression of terror.

"Ginevra, you love the enemy of your family," said Piombo, at last, not daring to look at his daughter. "That is true," she replied.

"You must choose between us. Our vendetta is a part of our being. Whose does not share my vengeance is not a member of my family."

"My choice is made," replied Ginevra, calmly.

His daughter's tranquillity misled Bartolomeo.

"Oh! my dear child!" he cried, letting her see his eyes moistened with tears, the first and the only tears he ever shed in life.

"I shall be his wife," said Ginevra, abruptly.

Bartolomeo seemed dazed for a moment, but he recovered his coolness instantly, and replied:—

"The marriage will not take place in my lifetime; I will never consent to it."

Ginevra kept silence.

"Ginevra," continued the baron, "have you reflected that Luigi is the son of a man who killed your brother?"

"He was six years old when that crime was committed; he was, therefore, not guilty of it," she replied.

"He is a Porta!" cried Bartolomeo.

"I have never shared that hatred," said Ginevra, eagerly. "You did not bring me up to think a Porta must be a monster. How could I know that one of those whom you thought you had killed survived? Is it not natural that you should now yield your vendetta to my feelings?"

"A Porta!" repeated Piombo. "If his father had found you in your bed you would not be living now; he would have taken your life a hundred times."

"It may be so," she answered; "but his son has given me life, and more than life. To see Luigi is a happiness without which I cannot live. Luigi has revealed to me the world of sentiments. I may, perhaps, have seen faces more beautiful than his, but none has ever charmed me thus; I may have heard voices—no, no, never any so melodious! Luigi loves me; he will be my husband."

"Never," said Piombo. "I would rather see you in your coffin, Ginevra."

The old Corsican rose and began to stride up and down the salon, dropping the following sentences, one by one, after pauses which betrayed his agitation.

"You think you can bend my will. Undeceive yourself. A Porta shall never be my son; that is my decree. Let there be no farther question of this between us. I am Bartolomeo di Piombo; do you hear me, Ginevra?"

"Do you attach some mysterious meaning to those words?" she asked, coldly.

"They mean that I have a dagger, and that I do not fear man's justice. Corsicans explain themselves to God."

"And I." said the daughter, rising, "am Ginevra

di Piombo, and I declare that within six months I shall be the wife of Luigi Porta. You are a tyrant, my father," she added, after a terrifying pause.

Bartolomeo clenched his fists and struck them on the marble of the chimneypiece.

"Ah! we are in Paris!" he muttered.

Then he was silent, crossed his arms, bowed his head on his breast, and said not another word during the whole evening.

After once giving utterance to her will, Ginevra affected inconceivable coolness. She opened the piano and sang, played charming nocturnes and scherzos with a grace and sentiment which displayed a perfect freedom of mind, thus triumphing over her father, whose darkling face showed no softening. The old man was cruelly hurt by this tacit insult; he gathered in this one moment the bitter fruits of the training he had given to his daughter. Respect is a barrier which protects parents as it does children, sparing grief to the former, remorse to the latter.

The next day, when Ginevra sought to leave the house at the hour when she usually went to the studio, she found the gates of the mansion closed to her. She said nothing, but soon found means to inform Luigi Porta of her father's severity. A chambermaid, who could neither read nor write, was able to carry letters between the lovers. For five days they corres-

ponded thus, thanks to the inventive shrewdness of youth.

The father and daughter seldom spoke to each other. Both were nursing in the depths of their heart a sentiment of hatred; they suffered, but they suffered proudly, and in silence. Recognizing how strong were the ties of love which bound them to each other, they each tried to break them, but without success. No gentle thought came, as formerly, to brighten the stern features of Piombo when he contemplated his Ginevra. The girl had something savage in her eye as she looked at her father; reproach sat enthroned on that innocent brow; she gave herself up, it is true, to happy thoughts, and yet, at times, remorse seemed to dull her eyes. It was not difficult to believe that she could never enjoy, peacefully, any happiness which caused sorrow to her parents.

With Bartolomeo, as with his daughter, the hesitations of this period caused by the native goodness of their souls were, nevertheless, compelled to give way before their pride and the rancor of their Corsican nature. They encouraged each other in their anger, and closed their eyes to the future. Perhaps they mutually flattered themselves that the one would yield to the other.

At last, on Ginevra's birthday, her mother, in despair at the estrangement which, day by day, as-

sumed a more serious character, meditated an attempt to reconcile the father and daughter, by help of the memories of this family anniversary. They were all three sitting in Bartolomeo's study. Ginevra guessed her mother's intention by the timid hesitation on her face, and she smiled sadly.

At this moment a servant announced two notaries, accompanied by witnesses. Bartolomeo looked fixedly at these persons, whose cold and formal faces were grating to souls so passionately strained as those of the three chief actors in this scene. The old man turned to his daughter and looked at her uneasily. He saw upon her face a smile of triumph which made him expect some shock; but, after the manner of savages, he affected to maintain a deceitful indifference as he gazed at the notaries with an assumed air of calm curiosity. The strangers sat down, after being invited to do so by a gesture of the old man.

"Monsieur is, no doubt, M. le Baron di Piombo?" began the oldest of the notaries.

Bartolomeo bowed. The notary made a slight inclination of the head, looked at Ginevra with a sly expression, took out his snuff-box, opened it, and slowly inhaled a pinch, as if seeking for the words with which to open his errand; then, while uttering them, he made continual pauses (an oratorical maneuvre very imperfectly represented by the printer's dash—).

"Monsieur," he said," I am Monsieur Roguin, your daughter's notary, and we have come — my colleague and I — to fulfil the intention of the law and — put an end to the divisions which — appear — to exist — between yourself and Mademoiselle, your daughter, — on the subject — of — her — marriage with Monsieur Luigi Porta."

This speech, pedantically delivered, probably seemed to Monsieur Roguin so fine that his hearer could not at once understand it. He paused, and looked at Bartolomeo with that peculiar expression of the mere business lawyer, a mixture of servility with familiarity. Accustomed to feign much interest in the persons with whom they deal, notaries have at last produced upon their features a grimace of their own, which they take on and off as an official pallium. This mask of benevolence, the mechanism of which is so easy to perceive, irritated Bartolomeo to such an extent that he was forced to collect all the powers of his reason to prevent him from throwing Monsieur Roguin through the window. An expression of anger ran through his wrinkles, which caused the notary to think to himself: "I 've produced an effect."

"But," he continued, in a honeyed tone, "Monsieur le baron, on such occasions our duties are preceded by — efforts at — conciliation — Deign, therefore, to have the goodness to listen to me — It is in evi-

dence that Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo — attains this very day — the age at which the law allows a respectful summons before proceeding to the celebration of a marriage - in spite of the non-consent of parents. Now — it is usual in families — who enjoy a certain consideration — who belong to society — who preserve some dignity - to whom, in short, it is desirable not to let the public into the secret of their differences — and who, moreover, do not wish to injure themselves by blasting with reprobation the future of a young couple (for - that is injuring themselves), it is usual, I say - among these honorable families - not to allow these summonses - to take place - or remain - a monument to - divisions which should end - by ceasing - Whenever, monsieur, a young lady has recourse to respectful summons, she exhibits a determination too marked to allow of a father - of a mother," here he turned to the baroness, "hoping or expecting that she will follow their wishes - Paternal resistance being null - by reason of this fact in the first place - and also from its being nullified by law, it is customary - for every sensible man - after making a final remonstrance to his child — and before she proceeds to the respectful summons — to leave her at liberty to -- "

Monsieur Roguin stopped, perceiving that he might talk on for two hours without obtaining any answer;

he felt, moreover, a singular emotion at the aspect of the man he was attempting to convert. An extraordinary revolution had taken place on Piombo's face; his wrinkles, contracting into narrow lines, gave him a look of indescribable cruelty, and he cast upon the notary the glance of a tiger. The baroness was mute and passive. Ginevra, calm and resolute, waited silently; she knew that the notary's voice was more potent than hers, and she seemed to have decided to say nothing. At the moment when Roguin ceased speaking, the scene had become so terrifying that the men who were there as witnesses trembled; never, perhaps, had they known so awful a silence. The notaries looked at each other, as if in consultation, and finally rose and walked to the window.

"Did you ever meet people born into the world like that?" asked Roguin of his brother notary.

"You can't get anything out of him," replied the younger man. "In your place, I should simply read the summons. That old fellow is n't a comfortable person; he is furious, and you'll gain nothing whatever by arguing with him."

Monsieur Roguin then read a stamped paper, containing the "respectful summons," prepared for the occasion; after which he proceeded to ask Bartolomeo what answer he made to it.

"Are there laws in France which destroy paternal authority? —" demanded the Corsican.

- "Monsieur " said Roguin, in his honeyed tones.
- "Which tear a daughter from her father? -- "
- "Monsieur "
- "Which deprive an old man of his last consolation?--"
- "Monsieur, your daughter only belongs to you if —"
 - "And kill him? -- "
 - "Monsieur, permit me —"

There is nothing more horrible than the coolness and precise reasoning of notaries amid the many passionate scenes in which they are accustomed to take part.

The forms that Piombo saw about him seemed, to his eyes, escaped from hell; his repressed and concentrated rage knew no longer any bounds as the calm and fluted voice of the little notary uttered the words: "permit me." By a sudden movement he sprang to a dagger that was hanging to a nail above the fireplace, and rushed toward his daughter. The younger of the two notaries and one of the witnesses threw themselves before Ginevra; but Piombo knocked them violently down, his face on fire, and his eyes casting flames more terrifying than the glitter of the dagger. When Ginevra saw him approach her she looked at him fixedly with an air of triumph, and advancing slowly, knelt down. "No, no! I cannot!" he cried, flinging away the weapon, which buried itself in the wainscot.

"Well, then! have mercy! have pity!" she said. "You hesitate to be my death, and you refuse me life! Oh! father, never have I loved you as I do at this moment; give me Luigi! I ask for your consent upon my knees: a daughter can humiliate herself before her father. My Luigi, give me my Luigi, or I die!"

The violent excitement which suffocated her stopped her words, for she had no voice; her convulsive movements showed plainly that she lay, as it were, between life and death. Bartolomeo roughly pushed her from him.

"Go," he said. "The wife of Luigi Porta cannot be a Piombo. I have no daughter. I have not the strength to curse you, but I cast you off; you have no father. My Ginevra Piombo is buried here," he said, in a deep voice, pressing violently on his heart. "Go, leave my house, unhappy girl," he added, after a moment's silence. "Go, and never come into my sight again."

So saying, he took Ginevra by the arm to the gate of the house and silently put her out.

"Luigi!" cried Ginevra, entering the humble lodging of her lover, — "my Luigi, we have no other fortune than our love."

"Then am I richer than the kings of the earth!" he cried.

- ."My father and my mother have cast me off," she said, in deepest sadness.
 - "I will love you in place of them."
- "Then let us be happy, we will be happy!" she cried, with a gayety in which there was something dreadful.

v.

MARRIAGE.

The day after Ginevra was driven from her father's house she went to ask Madame Servin for asylum and protection until the period fixed by law for her marriage to Luigi Porta.

Here began for her that apprenticeship to trouble which the world strews about the path of those who do not follow its conventions. Madame Servin received her very coldly, being much annoyed by the harm which Ginevra's affair had inflicted on her husband, and told her, in politely cautious words, that she must not count upon her help in future. Too proud to persist, but amazed at a selfishness hitherto unknown to her, the girl took a room in the lodging-house that was nearest to that of Luigi. The son of the Portas passed all his days at the feet of his future wife; and his vouthful love, the purity of his words, dispersed the clouds from the mind of the banished daughter; the future was so beautiful as he painted it that she ended by smiling joyfully, though without forgetting her father's severity.

One morning the servant of the lodging house brought to Ginevra's room a number of trunks and packages containing stuffs, linen, clothes, and a great quantity of other articles necessary for a young wife in setting up a home of her own. In this welcome provision she recognized her mother's foresight, and, on examining the gifts, she found a purse, in which the baroness had put the money belonging to her daughter, adding to it the amount of her own savings. The purse was accompanied by a letter, in which the mother implored the daughter to forego the fatal marriage if it were still possible to do so. It had cost her, she said, untold difficulty to send these few things to her daughter; she entreated her not to think her hard if, henceforth, she were forced to abandon her to want: she feared she could never again assist her: but she blessed her and prayed for her happiness in this fatal marriage, if, indeed, she persisted in making it, assuring her that she should never cease to think of her darling child. Here the falling tears had effaced some words of the letter.

"Oh, mother!" cried Ginevra, deeply moved.

She felt the impulse to rush home, to breathe the blessed air of her father's house, to fling herself at his feet, to see her mother. She was springing forward to accomplish this wish, when Luigi entered. At the mere sight of him her filial emotion vanished; her tears

were stopped, and she no longer had the strength to abandon that loving and unfortunate youth. To be the sole hope of a noble being, to love him and then abandon him! — that sacrifice is a treachery of which young hearts are incapable. Ginevra had the generosity to bury her own grief and suffering silently in her soul.

The marriage day arrived. Ginevra had no friend While she was dressing, Luigi fetched the with her. witnesses necessary to sign the certificate of marriage. These witnesses were worthy persons; one, a cavalry sergeant, was under obligations to Luigi, contracted on the battlefield, obligations which are never obliterated from the heart of an honest man; the other, a master-mason, was the proprietor of the house in which the young couple had hired an apartment for their Each witness brought a friend, and all future home. four, with Luigi, came to escort the bride. Little accustomed to social functions, and seeing nothing in the service they were rendering Luigi but a simple matter of business, they were dressed in their ordinary clothes, without any luxury, and nothing about them denoted the usual joy of a marriage procession.

Ginevra herself was dressed simply, as befitted her present fortunes; and yet her beauty was so noble and so imposing that the words of greeting died away upon the lips of the witnesses, who supposed themselves obliged to pay her some usual compliments. They bowed to her with respect, and she returned the bow; but they did so in silence, looking at her with admiration. This reserve cast a chill over the whole party. Joy never bursts forth freely except among those who are equals. Thus chance determined that all should be dull and grave around the bridal pair; nothing reflected, outwardly, the happiness that reigned within their hearts.

The church and the mayor's office being near by, Luigi and Ginevra, followed by the four witnesses required by law, walked the distance, with a simplicity that deprived of all pomp this greatest event in social life. They saw a crowd of waiting carriages in the mayor's court-yard; and when they reached the great hall where the civil marriages take place, they found two other wedding-parties impatiently awaiting the mayor's arrival.

Ginevra sat down beside Luigi at the end of a long bench; their witnesses remained standing, for want of seats. Two brides, elaborately dressed in white, with ribbons, laces, and pearls, and crowned with orange-blossoms whose satiny petals nodded beneath their veils, were surrounded by joyous families, and accompanied by their mothers, to whom they looked up, now and then, with eyes that were content and timid both; the faces of all the rest reflected happi-

ness, and seemed to be invoking blessings on the youthful pairs. Fathers, witnesses, brothers, and sisters went and came, like a happy swarm of insects disporting in the sun. Each seemed to be impressed with the value of this passing moment of life, when the heart finds itself between two hopes, — the wishes of the past, the promises of the future.

As she watched them, Ginevra's heart swelled within her; she pressed Luigi's arm, and gave him a look. A tear rolled from the eyes of the young Corsican; never did he so well understand the joys that his Ginevra was sacrificing to him. That precious tear caused her to forget all else but him, — even the abandonment in which she sat there. Love poured down its treasures of light upon their hearts; they saw nought else but themselves in the midst of the joyous tumult; they were there alone, in that crowd, as they were destined to be, henceforth, in life. Their witnesses, indifferent to what was happening, conversed quietly on their own affairs.

"Oats are very dear," said the sergeant to the mason.

"But they have not gone up like lime, relatively speaking," replied the contractor.

Then they walked round the hall.

"How one loses time here," said the mason, replacing a thick silver watch in his fob. Luigi and Ginevra, sitting pressed to one another, seemed like one person. A poet would have admired their two heads, inspired by the same sentiment, colored in the same tones, silent and saddened in presence of that humming happiness sparkling in diamonds, gay with flowers, — a gayety in which there was something fleeting. The joy of those noisy and splendid groups was visible; that of Ginevra and Luigi was buried in their bosom. On one side the tumult of common pleasure, on the other, the delicate silence of happy souls, — earth and heaven!

But Ginevra was not wholly free from the weaknesses of women. Superstitious as an Italian, she saw an omen in this contrast, and in her heart there lay a sense of terror, as invincible as her love.

Suddenly the office servant, in the town livery, opened a folding-door. Silence reigned, and his voice was heard, like the yapping of a dog, calling Monsieur Luigi da Porta and Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo. This caused some embarrassment to the young pair. The celebrity of the bride's name attracted attention, and the spectators seemed to wonder that the wedding was not more sumptuous. Ginevra rose, took Luigi's arm, and advanced firmly, followed by the witnesses. A murmur of surprise, which went on increasing, and a general whispering reminded Ginevra that all present were wondering at the absence of her parents; her father's wrath seemed present to her.

- "Call in the families," said the mayor to the clerk whose business it was to read aloud the certificates.
- "The father and mother protest," replied the clerk, phlegmatically.
 - "On both sides?" inquired the mayor.
 - "The groom is an orphan."
 - "Where are the witnesses?"
- "Here," said the clerk, pointing to the four men, who stood with arms folded, like so many statues.
 - "But if the parents protest -- " began the mayor.
- "The respectful summons has been duly served," replied the clerk, rising, to lay before the mayor the papers annexed to the marriage certificate.

This bureaucratic discussion had something blighting about it; in a few words it contained the whole story. The hatred of the Portas and the Piombos and their terrible passions were inscribed on this page of the civil law as the annals of a people (contained, it may be, in one word only, — Napoleon, Robespierre) are engraven on a tombstone. Ginevra trembled. Like the dove on the face of the waters, having no place to rest its feet but the ark, so Ginevra could take refuge only in the eyes of Luigi from the cold and dreary waste around her.

The mayor assumed a stern, disapproving air, and his clerk looked up at the couple with malicious curiosity. No marriage was ever so little festal. Like

other human things when deprived of their accessories, it became a simple act in itself, great only in thought.

After a few questions, to which the bride and bridegroom responded, and a few words mumbled by the mayor, and after signing the registers, with their witnesses, duly, Luigi and Ginevra were made one. Then the wedded pair walked back through two lines of joyous relations who did not belong to them, and whose only interest in their marriage was the delay caused to their own wedding by this gloomy bridal. When, at last, Ginevra found herself in the mayor's court-yard, under the open sky, a sigh escaped her breast.

"Can a lifetime of devotion and love suffice to prove my gratitude for your courage and tenderness, my Ginevra?" said Luigi.

At these words, said with tears of joy, the bride forgot her sufferings; for she had indeed suffered in presenting herself before the public to obtain a happiness her parents refused to sanction.

"Why should others come between us?" she said with an artlessness of feeling that delighted Luigi.

A sense of accomplished happiness now made the step of the young pair lighter; they saw neither heaven, nor earth, nor houses; they flew, as it were, on wings to the church. When they reached a dark little chapel in one corner of the building, and stood before a plain,

undecorated altar, an old priest married them. There, as in the mayor's office, two other marriages were taking place, still pursuing them with pomp. church, filled with friends and relations, echoed with the roll of carriages, and the hum of beadles, sextons, and priests. Altars were resplendent with sacramental luxury; the wreaths of orange-flowers that crowned the figures of the Virgin were fresh. Flowers, incense, gleaming tapers, velvet cushions embroidered with gold, were everywhere. When the time came to hold above the heads of Luigi and Ginevra the symbol of eternal union, - that yoke of satin, white, soft, brilliant, light for some, lead for most, - the priest looked about him in vain for the acolytes whose place it was to perform that joyous function. Two of the witnesses fulfilled it for them. The priest addressed a hasty homily to the pair on the perils of life, on the duties they must, some day, inculcate upon their children, - throwing in, at this point, an indirect reproach to Ginevra on the absence of her parents; then, after uniting them before God, as the mayor had united them before the law, he left the now married couple.

"God bless them!" said Verguiaud, the sergeaut, to the mason, when they reached the church porch. "No two creatures were ever more fitted for one another. The parents of the girl are foolish. I don't know a braver soldier than Colonel Luigi. If the whole army had behaved like him, l'autre would be here still."

This blessing of the old soldier, the only one bestowed upon their marriage-day, shed a balm on Ginevra's heart.

They parted with hearty shakings of hand; Luigi thanked his laudlord.

"Adieu, mon brave," he said to the sergeant. "I thank you."

"I am now and ever at your service, colonel,—soul, body, horses, and carriages; all that is mine is yours."

"How he loves you!" said Ginevra.

Luigi now hurried his bride to the house they were to occupy. Their modest apartment was soon reached; and there, when the door closed upon them, Luigi took his wife in his arms, exclaiming, —

"Oh, my Ginevra! for now you are mine, here is our true wedding. Here," he added, "all things will smile upon us."

Together they went through the three rooms contained in their lodging. The room first entered served as salon and dining-room in one; on the right was a bedchamber, on the left a large study which Luigi had arranged for his wife; in it she found easels, colorboxes, lay-figures, casts, pictures, portfolios, — in short, the paraphernalia of an artist.

"So here I am to work!" she said, with an expression of childlike happiness.

She looked long at the hangings and the furniture, turning again and again to thank Luigi, for there was something that approached magnificence in the little retreat. A bookcase contained her favorite books; a piano filled an angle of the room. She sat down upon a divan, drew Luigi to her side, and said, in a caressing voice, her hand in his,—

- "You have good taste."
- "Those words make me happy," he replied.
- "But let me see all," said Ginevra, to whom Luigi had made a mystery of the adornment of the rooms.

They entered the nuptial chamber, fresh and white as a virgin.

- "Oh! come away," said Luigi, smiling.
- "But I wish to see all."

And the imperious Ginevra looked at each piece of furniture with the minute care of an antiquary examining a coin; she touched the silken hangings, and went over every article with the artless satisfaction of a bride in the treasures of her wedding outfit.

"We begin by ruining ourselves," she said, in a half-joyous, half-anxious tone.

"True! for all my back-pay is there," replied Luigi. "I have mortgaged it to a worthy fellow named Gigonnet."

"Why did you do so?" she said, in a tone of reproach, through which could be heard her inward satisfaction. "Do you believe I should be less happy in a garret? But," she added, "it is all charming, and—it is ours!"

Luigi looked at her with such enthusiasm that she lowered her eyes.

"Now let us see the rest," she cried.

Above these three rooms, under the roof, was a study for Luigi, a kitchen, and a servant's-room. Ginevra was much pleased with her little domain, although the view from the windows was limited by the high wall of a neighboring house, and the court-yard, from which their light was derived, was gloomy. But the two lovers were so happy in heart, hope so adorned their future, that they chose to see nothing but what was charming in their hidden nest. They were there in that vast house, lost in the immensity of Paris, like two pearls in their shell in the depths of ocean; to all others it might have seemed a prison; to them it was paradise.

The first few days of their union were given to love. The effort to turn at once to work was too difficult; they could not resist the charm of their own passion. Luigi lay for hours at the feet of his wife, admiring the color of her hair, the moulding of her forehead, the enchanting socket of her eyes, the purity and

whiteness of the two arches beneath which the eyes themselves turned slowly, expressing the happiness of a satisfied love. Ginevra caressed the hair of her Luigi, never weary of gazing at what she called his beltù folgorante, and the delicacy of his features. She was constantly charmed by the nobility of his manners, as she herself attracted him by the grace of hers.

They played together, like children, with nothings, - nothings that brought them ever back to their love, - ceasing their play only to fall into a revery of the far niente. An air sung by Gineyra reproduced to their souls the enchanting lights and shadows of their passion. Together, uniting their steps as they did their souls, they roamed about the country, finding everywhere their love, - in the flowers, in the sky, in the glowing tints of the setting sun; they read it in even the capricious vapors which met and struggled in the ether. Each day resembled in nothing its predecessors; their love increased, and still increased, because it was a true love. They had tested each other in what seemed only a short time; and, instinctively, they recognized that their souls were of a kind whose inexhaustible riches promised for the future unceasing joys.

Theirs was love in all its artlessness, with its interminable conversations, unfinished speeches, long

silences, oriental repose, and oriental ardor. Luigi and Ginevra comprehended love. Love is like the ocean: seen superficially, or in haste, it is called monotonous by common souls, whereas some privileged beings can pass their lives in admiring it, and in finding, ceaselessly, the varying phenomena that enchant them.

Soon, however, prudence and foresight drew the young couple from their Eden; it was necessary to work to live. Ginevra, who possessed a special talent for imitating old paintings, took up the business of copying, and soon found many customers among the picture-dealers. Luigi, on his side, sought long and actively for occupation, but it was hard for a young officer whose talents had been restricted to the study of strategy to find anything to do in Paris.

At last, weary of vain efforts, his soul filled with despair at seeing the whole burden of their subsistence falling on Ginevra, it occurred to him to make use of his handwriting, which was excellent. With a persistency of which he saw an example in his wife, he went round among the lawyers and notaries of Paris, asking for papers to copy. The frankness of his manners and his situation interested many in his favor; he soon obtained enough work to be obliged to find young men to assist him; and this employment became, little by little, a regular business. The profits of his office

and the sale of Ginevra's pictures gave the young couple a competence of which they were justly proud, for it was the fruit of their industry.

This, to the busy pair, was the happiest period of their lives. The days flowed rapidly by, filled with occupation and the joys of their love. At night, after working all day, they met with delight in Ginevra's studio. Music refreshed their weariness. No expression of regret or melancholy obscured the happy features of the young wife, and never did she utter a complaint. She appeared to her Luigi with a smile upon her lips and her eyes beaming. Each cherished a ruling thought which would have made them take pleasure in a labor still more severe; Ginevra said in her heart that she worked for Luigi, and Luigi the same for Ginevra.

Sometimes, in the absence of her husband, the thought of the perfect happiness she might have had if this life of love could have been lived in presence of her father and mother overcame the young wife; and then, as she felt the full power of remorse, she dropped into melancholy; mournful pictures passed like shadows across her imagination; she saw her old father alone, or her mother weeping in secret lest the inexorable Piombo should perceive her tears. The two white, solemn heads rose suddenly before her, and the thought came that never again should she see them

except in memory. This thought pursued her like a presentiment.

She celebrated the anniversary of her marriage by giving her husband a portrait he had long desired,—that of his Ginevra, painted by herself. Never had the young artist done so remarkable a work. Aside from the resemblance, the glow of her beauty, the purity of her feelings, the happiness of love were there depicted by a sort of magic. This masterpiece of her art and her joy was a votive offering to their wedded felicity.

Another year of ease and comfort went by. The history of their life may be given in three words: They were happy. No event happened to them of sufficient importance to be recorded.

VI.

RETRIBUTION.

At the beginning of the year 1819 the picture-dealers requested Ginevra to give them something beside copies; for competition had so increased that they could no longer sell her work to advantage. Madame Porta then perceived the mistake she had made in not exercising her talent for *genre* painting, which might, by this time, have brought her reputation. She now attempted portrait-painting. But here she was forced to compete against a crowd of artists in greater need of money than herself. However, as Luigi and Ginevra had laid by a few savings, they were not, as yet, uneasy about the future.

Toward the end of the winter of that year Luigi worked without intermission. He, too, was struggling against competitors. The payment for writing had so decreased that he found it impossible to employ assistance; he was forced, therefore, to work a much longer time himself to obtain the same emolument. His wife had finished several pictures which were not without merit; but the dealers were scarcely buying

those of artists with reputations; consequently, her paintings had little chance. Ginevra offered them for almost nothing, but without success.

The situation of the household now began to be alarming. The souls of husband and wife floated on the ocean of their happiness, love overwhelmed them with its treasures, while poverty rose, like a skeleton, amid their harvest of joy. Yet, all the while, they hid from each other their secret anxiety. Ginevra felt like weeping as she watched Luigi's worn and suffering face, she redoubled her caresses; and Luigi, keeping his dark forebodings in the depths of his soul, expressed to his Ginevra the tenderest love. They sought a compensation for their troubles in exalting their feelings; and their words, their joys, their caresses became suffused, as it were, with a species of frenzy. They feared the future. What feeling can be compared in strength with that of a passion which may cease on the morrow, killed by death or want? When they talked together of their poverty each felt the necessity of deceiving the other, and they fastened with mutual ardor on the slightest hope.

One night Ginevra woke and missed Luigi from her side. She rose in terror. A faint light shining on the opposite wall of the little court-yard revealed to her that her husband was working in his study at night.

Luigi was now in the habit of waiting till his wife was asleep, and then going up to his garret to write. Four o'clock struck. Ginevra lay down again, and pretended to sleep. Presently Luigi returned, overcome with fatigue and drowsiness. Ginevra looked sadly on the beautiful, worn face, where toil and care were already drawing lines of wrinkles.

"It is for me he spends his nights in writing," she said to herself, weeping.

A thought dried her tears. She would imitate Luigi. That same day she went to a print-shop, and, by help of a letter of recommendation she had obtained from Élie Magus, one of her picture-dealers, she obtained an order for the coloring of lithographs. During the day she painted her pictures and attended to the cares of her household; then, when night came, she colored the engravings. This loving couple entered their nuptial bed only to deceive each other; both feigned sleep, and left it, — Luigi, as soon as he thought his wife was sleeping, Ginevra as soon as he had gone.

One night Luigi, burning with a sort of fever, induced by a toil under which his strength was beginning to give way, opened the casement of his garret to breathe the morning air, and shake off, for a moment, the burden of his care. Happening to glance downward, he saw the reflection of Ginevra's lamp on the

opposite wall, and the poor fellow guessed the truth. He went down, stepping softly, and surprised his wife in her studio, coloring engravings.

"Oh, Ginevra!" he cried.

She gave a convulsive bound in her chair, and blushed.

"Could I sleep while you were wearing yourself out with toil?" she said.

"But to me alone belongs the right to work in this way," he answered.

"Could I be idle," she asked, her eyes filling with tears, "when I know that every mouthful we eat costs a drop of your blood? I should die if I could not add my efforts to yours. All should be in common between us: pains and pleasures, both."

"She is cold!" cried Luigi, in despair. "Wrap your shawl closer round you, my own Ginevra; the night is damp and chilly."

They went to the window, the young wife leaning on the breast of her beloved, who held her round the waist, and, together, in deep silence, they gazed upward at the sky, which the dawn was slowly brightening. Clouds of a grayish hue were moving rapidly; the East was growing luminous.

"See!" said Ginevra. "It is an orien. We shall be happy."

"Yes, in heaven," replied Luigi, with a bitter

smile. "Oh, Ginevra! you who deserved all the treasures upon earth—"

"I have your heart," she said, in tones of joy.

"Ah! I complain no more!" he answered, straining her tightly to him, and covering with kisses the delicate face, which was losing the freshness of youth, though its expression was still so soft, so tender that he could not look at it and not be comforted.

"What silence!" said Ginevra, presently. "Dear friend, I take great pleasure in sitting up. The majesty of Night is so contagious, it awes, it inspires. There is I know not what great power in the thought: all sleep, I wake."

"Oh, my Ginevra," he cried, "it is not to-night alone I feel how delicately moulded is your soul. But see, the dawn is shining, — come and sleep."

"Yes," replied Ginevra, "if I do not sleep alone. I suffered too much that night I first discovered that you were waking while I slept."

The courage with which these two young people fought with misery received for a while its due reward; but an event which usually crowns the happiness of a household to them proved fatal. Ginevra had a son, who was, to use the popular expression, "as beautiful as the day." The sense of motherhood doubled the strength of the young wife. Luigi borrowed money to meet the expenses of Ginevra's confinement. At

first she did not feel the fresh burden of their situation; and the pair gave themselves wholly up to the joy of possessing a child. It was their last happiness.

Like two swimmers uniting their efforts to breast a current, these two Corsican souls struggled courageously; but sometimes they gave way to an apathy
which resembled the sleep that precedes death. Soon
they were obliged to sell their jewels. Poverty
appeared to them suddenly, — not hideous, but plainly
clothed, almost easy to endure; its voice had nothing
terrifying; with it came neither spectres, nor despair,
nor rags; but it made them lose the memory and the
habits of comfort; it dried the springs of pride.
Then, before they knew it, came want, — want in all
its horror, indifferent to its rags, treading underfoot
all human sentiments.

Seven or eight months after the birth of the little Bartolomeo, it would have been hard to see in the mother who suckled her sickly babe the original of the beautiful portrait, the sole remaining ornament of the squalid home. Without fire through a hard winter, the graceful outlines of Ginevra's figure were slowly destroyed; her cheeks grew white as porcelain, and her eyes dulled as though the springs of life were drying up within her. Watching her shrunken, discolored child, she felt no suffering but for that young misery; and Luigi had no courage to smile upon his son.

"I have wandered over Paris," he said, one day. "I know no one; can I ask help of strangers? Vergniaud, my old sergeant, is concerned in a conspiracy, and they have put him in prison; besides, he has already lent me all he could spare. As for our landlord, it is over a year since he asked me for any rent."

"But we are not in want," replied Ginevra, gently, affecting calmness.

"Every hour brings some new difficulty," continued Luigi, in a tone of terror.

Another day Luigi took Ginevra's pictures, her portrait, and the few articles of furniture which they could still exist without, and sold them for a miserable sum, which prolonged the agony of the hapless household for a time. During these days of wretchedness Ginevra showed the sublimity of her nature and the extent of her resignation.

Stoically she bore the strokes of misery; her strong soul held her up against all woes; she worked with unfaltering hand beside her dying son, performed her, household duties with marvellous activity, and sufficed for all. She was even happy, still, when she saw on Luigi's lips a smile of surprise at the cleanliness she produced in the one poor room where they had taken refuge.

"Dear, I kept this bit of bread for you," she said, one evening, when he returned, worn-out.

"And you?"

"I? I have dined, dear Luigi; I want nothing more."

And the tender look on her beseeching face urged him more than her words to take the food of which she had deprived herself.

Luigi kissed her, with one of those kisses of despair that were given in 1793 between friends as they mounted the scaffold. In such supreme moments two beings see each other, heart to heart. The hapless Luigi, comprehending suddenly that his wife was starving, was seized with the fever which consumed her. He shuddered, and went out, pretending that some business called him; for he would rather have drunk the deadliest poison than escape death by eating that last morsel of bread that was left in his home.

He wandered wildly about Paris; amid the gorgeous equipages, in the bosom of that flaunting luxury that displays itself everywhere; he hurried past the windows of the money-changers where gold was glittering; and at last he resolved to sell himself to be a substitute for military service, hoping that this sacrifice would save Ginevra, and that her father, during his absence, would take her home.

He went to one of the agents who manage these transactions, and felt a sort of happiness in recognizing an old officer of the Imperial guard.

"It is two days since I have eaten anything," he said to him in a slow, weak voice. "My wife is dying of hunger, and has never uttered one word of complaint; she will die smiling, I think. For God's sake, comrade," he added, bitterly, "buy me in advance; I am robust; I am no longer in the service, and I—"

The officer gave Luigi a sum on account of that which he promised to procure for him. The wretched man laughed convulsively as he grasped the gold, and ran with all his might, breathless, to his home, crying out at times:—

"Ginevra! Oh, my Ginevra!"

It was almost night when he reached his wretched room. He entered very softly, fearing to cause too strong an emotion to his wife, whom he had left so weak. The last rays of the sun, entering through the garret window, were fading from Ginevra's face as she sat sleeping in her chair, and holding her child upon her breast.

"Wake, my dear one," he said, not observing the infant, which shone, at that moment, with supernatural light.

Hearing that voice, the poor mother opened her eyes, met Luigi's look, and smiled; but Luigi himself gave a cry of horror; he scarcely recognized his wife, now half mad. With a gesture of savage energy he showed

her the gold. Ginevra began to laugh mechanically; but suddenly she cried, in a dreadful voice:—

"The child, Luigi, he is cold!"

She looked at her son and swooned. The little Bartolomeo was dead. Luigi took his wife in his arms, without removing the child, which she clasped with inconceivable force; and after laying her on the bed he went out to seek help.

"Oh! my God!" he said, as he met his landlord on the stairs. "I have gold, gold, and my child has died of hunger, and his mother is dying, too! Help me!"

He returned like one distraught to his wife, leaving the worthy mason, and also the neighbors who heard him to gather a few things for the needs of so terrible a want, hitherto unknown, for the two Corsicans had carefully hidden it from a feeling of pride.

Luigi had cast his gold upon the floor and was kneeling by the bed on which lay his wife.

"Father! take care of my son, who bears your name," she was saying in her delirium.

"Oh, my angel! be calm," said Luigi, kissing her; "our good days are coming back to us."

"My Luigi," she said, looking at him with extraordinary attention, "listen to me. I feel that I am dying. My death is natural; I suffered too much; besides, a happiness so great as mine has to be paid for. Yes, my Luigi, be comforted. I have been so happy that if I were to live again I would again accept our fate. I am a bad mother; I regret you more than I regret my child — My child!" she added, in a hollow voice.

Two tears escaped her dying eyes, and suddenly she pressed the little body she had no power to warm.

"Give my hair to my father, in memory of his Ginevra," she said. "Tell him I have never blamed him."

Her head fell upon her husband's arm.

"No, you cannot die!" cried Luigi. "The doctor is coming. We have food. Your father will take you home. Prosperity is here. Stay with us, angel!"

But the faithful heart, so full of love, was growing cold. Ginevra turned her eyes instinctively to him she loved, though she was conscious of nought else. Confused images passed before her mind, now losing memory of earth. She knew that Luigi was there, for she clasped his icy hand tightly, and more tightly still, as though she strove to save herself from some precipice down which she feared to fall.

"Dear," she said, at last, "you are cold; I will warm you."

She tried to put his hand upon her heart, but died.

Two doctors, a priest, and several neighbors came into the room, bringing all that was necessary to save

the poor couple and calm their despair. These strangers made some noise in entering; but after they had entered, an awful silence filled the room.

While that scene was taking place, Bartolomeo and his wife were sitting in their antique chairs, each at a corner of the vast fireplace, where a glowing fire scarcely warmed the great spaces of their salon. The clock told midnight.

For some time past the old couple had lost the ability to sleep. At the present moment they sat there silent, like two persons in their dotage, gazing about them at things they did not see. Their deserted salon, so filled with memories to them, was feebly lighted by a single lamp which seemed expiring. Without the sparkling of the flame upon the hearth, they might soon have been in total darkness.

A friend had just left them; and the chair on which he had been sitting, remained where he left it, between the two Corsicans. Piombo was casting glances at that chair, — glances full of thoughts, crowding one upon another like remorse, — for the empty chair was Ginevra's. Elisa Piombo watched the expressions that now began to cross her husband's pallid face. Though long accustomed to divine his feelings from the changeful agitations of his face, they seemed to-night so threatening, and anon so melancholy that

she felt she could no longer read a soul that was now incomprehensible, even to her.

Would Bartolomeo yield, at last, to the memories awakened by that chair? Had he been shocked to see a stranger in that chair, used for the first time since his daughter left him? Had the hour of his mercy struck, — that hour she had vainly prayed and waited for till now?

These reflections shook the mother's heart successively. For an instant her husband's countenance became so terrible that she trembled at having used this simple means to bring about a mention of Ginevra's name. The night was wintry; the north wind drove the snowflakes so sharply against the blinds that the old couple fancied that they heard a gentle rustling. Ginevra's mother dropped her head to hide her tears. Suddenly a sigh burst from the old man's breast; his wife looked at him; he seemed to her crushed. Then she risked speaking — for the second time in three long years — of his daughter.

"Ginevra may be cold," she said, softly.

Piombo quivered.

"She may be hungry," she continued.

The old man dropped a tear.

"Perhaps she has a child and cannot suckle it; her milk is dried up!" said the mother, in accents of despair. "Let her come! let her come to me!" cried Piombo. "Oh! my precious child, thou hast conquered me."

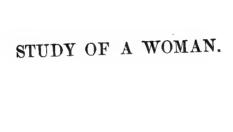
The mother rose as if to fetch her daughter. At that instant the door opened noisily, and a man, whose face no longer bore the semblance of humanity, stood suddenly before them.

"Dead! Our two families were doomed to exterminate each other. Here is all that remains of her," he said, laying Ginevra's long black hair upon the table.

The old people shook and quivered as if a stroke of lightning had blasted them.

Luigi no longer stood before them.

"He has spared me a shot, for he is dead," said Bartolomeo, slowly, gazing on the ground at his feet.



STUDY OF A WOMAN.

TO THE MARQUIS JEAN-CHARLES DI NEGRO.

THE Marquise de Listomère is one of those young women who have been brought up in the spirit of the She has principles, she fasts, takes the Restoration. sacrament, and goes to balls and operas very elegantly dressed; her confessor permits her to combine the mundane with sanctity. Always in conformity with the Church and with the world, she presents a living image of the present day, which seems to have taken the word "legality" for its motto. The conduct of the marquise shows precisely enough religious devotion to attain under a new Maintenon to the gloomy piety of the last days of Louis XIV., and enough worldliness to adopt the habits of gallantry of the first years of that reign, should it ever be revived. At the present moment she is strictly virtuous from policy, possibly from inclination. Married for the last seven years to the Marquis de Listomère, one of those deputies who expect a peerage, she may also consider that

such conduct will promote the ambitions of her family. Some women are reserving their opinion of her until the moment when Monsieur de Listomère becomes a peer of France, when she herself will be thirty-six years of age, — a period of life when most women discover that they are the dupes of social laws.

The marquis is a rather insignificant man. stands well at court; his good qualities are as negative as his defects; the former can no more make him a reputation for virtue than the latter can give him the sort of glamour east by vice. As deputy, he never speaks, but he votes right. He behaves in his own home as he does in the Chamber. Consequently, he is held to be one of the best husbands in France. Though not susceptible of lively interest, he never scolds, unless, to be sure, he is kept waiting. His friends have named him "dull weather," - aptly enough, for there is neither clear light nor total darkness about him. He is like all the ministers who have succeeded one another in France since the Charter. A woman with principles could not have fallen into better hands. It is certainly a great thing for a virtuous woman to have married a man incapable of follies.

Occasionally some fops have been sufficiently impertinent to press the hand of the marquise while dancing with her. They gained nothing in return but contemptuous glances; all were made to feel the shock of that insulting indifference which, like a spring frost, destroys the germs of flattering hopes. Beaux, wits, and fops, men whose sentiments are fed by sucking their canes, those of a great name, or a great fame, those of the highest or the lowest rank in her own world, they all blanch before her. She has conquered the right to converse as long and as often as she chooses with the men who seem to her agreeable, without being entered on the tablets of gossip. Certain coquettish women are capable of following a plan of this kind for seven years in order to gratify their fancies later; but to suppose any such reservations in the Marquise de Listomère would be to calumniate her.

I have had the happiness of knowing this phœnix. She talks well; I know how to listen; consequently I please her, and I go to her parties. That, in fact, was the object of my ambition.

Neither plain nor pretty, Madame de Listomère has white teeth, a dazzling skin, and very red lips; she is tall and well-made; her foot is small and slender, and she does not put it forth; her eyes, far from being dulled like those of so many Parisian women, have a gentle glow which becomes quite magical if, by chance, she is animated. A soul is then divined behind that rather indefinite form. If she takes an interest in the conversation she displays a grace which is otherwise buried beneath the precautions of cold demeanor, and

then she is charming. She does not seek success, but she obtains it. We find that for which we do not seek: that saying is so often true that some day it will be turned into a proverb. It is, in fact, the moral of this adventure, which I should not allow myself to tell if it were not echoing at the present moment through all the salons of Paris.

The Marquise de Listomère danced, about a month ago, with a young man as modest as he is lively, full of good qualities, but exhibiting, chiefly, his defects. He is ardent, but he laughs at ardor; he has talent, and he hides it; he plays the learned man with aristocrats, and the aristocrat with learned men. Eugène de Rastignac is one of those extremely clever young men who try all things, and seem to sound others to discover what the future has in store. While awaiting the age of ambition, he scoffs at everything; he has grace and originality, two rare qualities because the one is apt to exclude the other. On this occasion he talked for nearly half an hour with Madame de Listomère, without any predetermined idea of pleasing her. As they followed the caprices of conversation, which, beginning with the opera of "Guillaume Tell," had reached the topic of the duties of women, he looked at the marquise, more than once, in a manner that embarrassed her; then he left her and did not speak to her again for the rest of the evening. He danced,

played at écarté, lost some money, and went home to bed. I have the honor to assure you that the affair happened precisely thus. I add nothing, and I suppress nothing.

The next morning Rastignac woke late and stayed in bed, giving himself up to one of those matutinal reveries in the course of which a young man glides like a sylph under many a silken, or cashmere, or cotton drapery. The heavier the body from its weight of sleep, the more active the mind. Rastignac finally got up, without yawning over-much as many ill-bred persons are apt to do. He rang for his valet, ordered tea, and drank immoderately of it when it came; which will not seem extraordinary to persons who like tea; but to explain the circumstance to others, who regard that beverage as a panacea for indigestion, I will add that Eugène was, by this time, writing letters. He was comfortably seated, with his feet more frequently on the andirons than, properly, on the rug. Ah! to have one's feet on the polished bar which connects the two griffins of a fender, and to think of our love in our dressing-gown is so delightful a thing that I deeply regret the fact of having neither mistress, nor fender, nor dressing-gown.

The first letter which Eugène wrote was soon finished; he folded and sealed it, and laid it before him without adding the address. The second letter, begun at eleven o'clock, was not finished till mid-day. The four pages were closely filled.

"That woman keeps running in my head," he muttered, as he folded this second epistle and laid it before him, intending to direct it as soon as he had ended his involuntary revery.

He crossed the two flaps of his flowered dressing-gown, put his feet on a stool, slipped his hands into the pockets of his red cashmere trousers, and lay back in a delightful easy-chair with side wings, the seat and back of which described an angle of one hundred and twenty degrees. He stopped drinking tea and remained motionless, his eyes fixed on the gilded hand which formed the knob of his shovel, but without seeing either hand or shovel. He ceased even to poke the fire, — a vast mistake! Is n't it one of our greatest pleasures to play with the fire when we think of women? Our minds find speeches in those tiny blue flames which suddenly dart up and babble on the hearth. We interpret as we please the strong, harsh tones of a "burgundian."

Here I must pause to put before all ignorant persons an explanation of that word, derived from a very distinguished etymologist who wishes his name kept secret.

"Burgundian" is the name given, since the reign of Charles VI., to those noisy detonations, the result of which is to fling upon the carpet or the clothes a little coal or ember, the trifling nucleus of a conflagration. Heat or fire releases, they say, a bubble of air left in the heart of the wood by a gnawing worm. Inde amor, inde burgundus. We tremble when we see the structure we had so carefully erected between the logs rolling down like an avalanche. Oh! to build and stir and play with fire when we love is the material development of our thoughts.

It was at this moment that I entered the room. Rastignac gave a jump and said: —

"Ah! there you are, dear Horace; how long have you been here?"

"Just come."

"Ah!"

He took up the two letters, directed them, and rang for his servant.

"Take these," he said, "and deliver them."

Joseph departed without a word; admirable servant!

We began to talk of the expedition to Morea, to which I was anxious to be appointed as physician. Eugène remarked that I should lose a great deal of time if I left Paris. We then conversed on various matters, and I think you will be glad if I suppress the conversation.

When the Marquise de Listomère rose, about halfpast two in the afternoon of that day, her waiting-maid, Caroline, gave her a letter which she read while Caroline was doing her hair (an imprudence which many young women are thoughtless enough to commit).

"Dear angel of love," said the letter, "treasure of my life and happiness —"

At these words the marquise was about to fling the letter in the fire; but there came into her head a fancy—which all virtuous women will readily understand—to see how a man who began a letter in that style could possibly end it. When she had turned the fourth page and read it, she let her arms drop like a person much fatigued.

"Caroline, go and ask who left this letter."

"Madame, I received it myself from the valet of Monsieur le Baron de Rastignac."

After that there was silence for some time.

"Does Madame intend to dress?" asked Caroline at last.

"No — He is certainly a most impertinent man," reflected the marquise.

I request all women to imagine for themselves the reflections of which this was the first.

Madame de Listomère ended hers by a formal decision to forbid her porter to admit Monsieur de Rastignac, and to show him, herself, something more than disdain when she met him in society; for his insolence far surpassed that of other men which

the marquise had ended by overlooking. At first she thought of keeping the letter; but on second thoughts she burned it.

"Madame has just received such a fine love-letter; and she read it," said Caroline to the housemaid.

"I should never have thought that of madame," replied the other, quite surprised.

That evening Madame de Listomère went to a party at the Marquis de Beauséant's, where Rastignac would probably betake himself. It was Saturday. The Marquis de Beauséant was in some way a connection of Monsieur de Rastignac, and the young man was not likely to miss coming. By two in the morning Madame de Listomère, who had gone there solely for the purpose of crushing Eugène by her coldness, discovered that she was waiting in vain. A brilliant man — Stendhal — has given the fantastic name of "crystallization" to the process which Madame de Listomère's thoughts went through before, during, and after this evening.

Four days later Eugène was scolding his valet.

"Ah ça! Joseph; I shall soon have to send you away, my lad."

"What is it, monsieur?"

"You do nothing but make mistakes. Where did you carry those letters I gave you Saturday?"

Joseph became stolid. Like a statue in some cathe-

dral porch, he stood motionless, entirely absorbed in the labors of imagination. Suddenly he smiled idiotically, and said:—

- "Monsieur, one was for the Marquise de Listomère, the other was for Monsieur's lawyer."
 - "You are certain of what you say?"

Joseph was speechless. I saw plainly that I must interfere, as I happened to be again in Eugène's apartment.

"Joseph is right," I said.

Eugène turned and looked at me.

- "I read the addresses quite involuntarily, and "
- "And," interrupted Eugène, "one of them was not for Madame de Nucingen?"
- "No, by all the devils, it was not. Consequently, I supposed, my dear fellow, that your heart was wandering from the rue Saint-Lazare to the rue Saint-Dominique."

Eugène struck his forehead with the flat of his hand and began to laugh; by which Joseph perceived that the blame was not on him.

Now, there are certain morals to this tale on which young men had better reflect. First mistake: Eugène thought it would be amusing to make Madame de Listomère laugh at the blunder which had made her the recipient of a love-letter which was not intended for her. Second mistake: he did not call on Madame de

Listomère for several days after the adventure, thus allowing the thoughts of that virtuous young woman to crystallize. There were other mistakes which I will here pass over in silence, in order to give the ladies the pleasure of deducing them, ex professo, to those who are unable to guess them.

Eugène at last went to call upon the marquise; but, on attempting to pass into the house, the porter stopped him, saying that Madame la marquise was out. As he was getting back into his carriage the Marquis de Listomère came home.

"Come in, Eugène," he said. "My wife is at home."
Pray excuse the marquis. A husband, however good
he may be, never attains perfection. As they went
up the staircase Rastignac perceived at least a dozen
blunders in worldly wisdom which had, unaccountably,

slipped into this page of the glorious book of his life.

When Madame de Listomère saw her husband ushering in Eugène she could not help blushing. The young baron saw that sudden color. If the most humble-minded man retains in the depths of his soul a certain conceit of which he never rids himself, any more than a woman ever rids herself of coquetry, who shall blame Eugène if he did say softly in his own mind: "What! that fortress, too?" So thinking, he posed in his cravat. Young men may not be grasping, but they like to get a new coin in their collection.

Monsieur de Listomère seized the "Gazette de France," which he saw on the mantelpiece, and carried it to a window, to obtain, by journalistic help, an opinion of his own on the state of France.

A woman, even a prude, is never long embarrassed, however difficult may be the position in which she finds herself; she seems always to have on hand the fig-leaf which our mother Eve bequeathed to her. Consequently, when Eugène, interpreting, in favor of his vanity, the refusal to admit him, bowed to Madame de Listomère in a tolerably intentional manner, she veiled her thoughts behind one of those feminine smiles which are more impenetrable than the words of a king.

"Are you unwell, madame? You denied yourself to visitors."

- "I am well, monsieur."
- "Perhaps you were going out?"
- "Not at all."
- "You expected some one?"
- "No one."

"If my visit is indiscreet you must blame Monsieur le marquis. I had already accepted your mysterious denial, when he himself came up, and introduced me into the sanctuary."

"Monsieur de Listomère is not in my confidence on this point. It is not always prudent to put a husband in possession of certain secrets." The firm and gentle tones in which the marquise said these words, and the imposing glance which she cast upon Rastignac made him aware that he had posed in his cravat a trifle prematurely.

"Madame, I understand you," he said, laughing. "I ought, therefore, to be doubly thankful that Monsieur le marquis met me; he affords me an opportunity to offer you excuses which might be full of danger were you not kindness itself."

The marquise looked at the young man with an air of some surprise, but she answered with dignity:—

"Monsieur, silence on your part will be the best excuse. As for me, I promise you entire forgetfulness, and the pardon which you scarcely deserve."

"Madame," said Rastignac, hastily, "pardon is not needed where there was no offence. The letter," he added, in a low voice, "which you received, and which you must have thought extremely unbecoming, was not intended for you."

The marquise could not help smiling, though she wished to seem offended.

"Why deceive?" she said, with a disdainful air, although the tones of her voice were gentle. "Now that I have duly scolded you, I am willing to laugh at a subterfuge which is not without cleverness. I know many women who would be taken in by it: 'Heavens! how he loves me!' they would say."

Here the marquise gave a forced laugh, and then added, in a tone of indulgence:—

"If we desire to continue friends let there be no more mistakes, of which it is impossible that I should be the dupe."

"Upon my honor, madame, you are so — far more than you think," replied Eugène.

"What are you talking about?" asked Monsieur de Listomère, who, for the last minute, had been listening to the conversation, the meaning of which he could not penetrate.

"Oh! nothing that would interest you," replied his wife

Monsieur de Listomère tranquilly returned to the reading of his paper, and presently said:—

"Ah! Madame de Mortsauf is dead; your poor brother has, no doubt, gone to Clochegourde."

"Are you aware, monsieur," resumed the marquise, turning to Eugène, "that what you have just said is a great impertinence?"

"If I did not know the strictness of your principles," he answered, naïvely, "I should think that you wished either to give me ideas which I deny myself, or else to tear a secret from me. But perhaps you are only amusing yourself with me."

The marquise smiled. That smile annoyed Eugène. "Madame," he said, "can you still believe in an

offence I have not committed? I earnestly hope that chance may not enable you to discover the name of the person who ought to have read that letter."

"What! can it be still Madame de Nucingen?" cried Madame de Listomère, more eager to penetrate that secret than to revenge herself for the impertinence of the young man's speeches.

Eugène colored. A man must be more than twentyfive years of age not to blush at being taxed with a fidelity that women laugh at — in order, perhaps, not to show that they envy it. However, he replied with tolerable self-possession:—

"Why not, madame?"

Such are the blunders we all make at twenty-five.

This speech caused a violent commotion in Madame de Listomère's bosom; but Rastignac did not yet know how to analyze a woman's face by a rapid or sidelong glance. The lips of the marquise paled, but that was all. She rang the bell for wood, and so constrained Rastignac to rise and take his leave.

"If that be so," said the marquise, stopping Eugène with a cold and rigid manner, "you will find it difficult to explain, monsieur, why your pen should, by accident, write my name. A name, written on a letter, is not a friend's opera-hat, which you might have taken, carelessly, on leaving a ball."

Eugène, discomfited, looked at the marquise with

an air that was both stupid and conceited. He felt that he was becoming ridiculous; and after stammering a few juvenile phrases he left the room.

A few days later the marquise acquired undeniable proofs that Eugène had told the truth. For the last fortnight she has not been seen in society.

The marquis tells all those who ask him the reason of this seclusion:—

"My wife has an inflammation of the stomach."

But I, her physician, who am now attending her, know it is really nothing more than a slight nervous attack, which she is making the most of in order to stay quietly at home.



THE MESSAGE.

TO MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DAMASO PARETO.

I have always desired to relate a true and simple incident, the telling of which once made a young man and his mistress tremble with fear and take refuge in each other's hearts, like two children who cling together on meeting a snake at the edge of woods.

At the risk of diminishing the interest of my narrative or of passing for a conceited fool, I begin by telling you the object of my present writing. I myself have played a part in this almost commonplace drama. If that drama does not interest you, it will be my fault as well as that of this absolutely true tale. Many true tales are deadly dull and wearisome. Half the real talent of a writer consists in choosing among true facts those that may become poetic.

In 1819 I had occasion to go from Paris to Moulins. The state of my purse obliged me to travel in the impériale of the diligence. Englishmen, you know, regard the seats in that aërial section of the vehicle as

the best. For the first few leagues of the way I found excellent reasons to justify this opinion of our neighbors. A young man, who seemed to me better off than I was myself, got up, by choice, into the same elevated position. He replied to my remarks by smiles that were perfectly inoffensive. Soon a certain conformity of age and thought, our mutual liking for the free air and the rich aspect of the scenery, which gradually unfolded as the lumbering vehicle rolled heavily along, and also some magnetic attraction impossible to explain, generated between us that sort of momentary intimacy to which travellers are apt to lend themselves; with all the more readiness, perhaps, because this ephemeral sentiment will soon cease, and binds us to nothing in the future.

We had not done thirty miles before we were talking of women and of love. With all the oratorical precautions required under such circumstances, it soon became, naturally, a question of our respective mistresses. Young, both of us, we were still at that period of life which worships women "of a certain age;" that is to say, women between thirty-five and forty: Oh! a poet who had listened to us from Montargis to I know not what relay might have gathered many an ardent expression, many a glowing portrait and tender confidence! Our modest fears, our silent ejaculations, our blushing faces gave an eloquence to that scene, the

artless charm of which I have never been able to recapture. Well, we must all stay young to understand youth! So, being of equal age, we understood each other marvellously well on all the more essential points of passion.

In the first place, we began by laying down the law in fact and principle that there was nothing so silly in all the world as a certificate of birth; that many women of forty were younger than certain other women of twenty; and, finally, that no woman was older than the age she seemed to be. This system putting no bounds to love, we swam, in good faith, through a limitless ocean. And at last, having made our mistresses young, charming, devoted, of high rank, full of exquisite taste, witty and refined; after bestowing upon them pretty feet, a satiny and softly perfumed skin, we acknowledged to each other, he, that Madame Such a one was thirty-eight years old, and I, that I adored a quadrigenarian.

Thereupon, being delivered, both of us, from a sort of vague fear, we resumed our confidences, all the more intimate for this brotherhood in love. It was now a strife as to which of the two had shown the greater depth of feeling. One had travelled five hundred miles to see the lady of his love for a single hour. The other had risked being taken for a wolf and shot in a park while rambling nocturnally beneath her

windows. In short, all our follies! Ah! if there be pleasure in recalling past dangers, what infinite delight there is in remembering vanished joys! Is it not twice enjoying them? Our perils, our great and our little happinesses, we told them all; even our jokes. friend's countess had smoked a cigar to please him. Mine made me my chocolate and never passed a day without writing to me or seeing me; his had invited him to stay three days in her house, whither he was now going; mine had done even better, or worse, as you may take it. Our husbands adored our countesses, - they were slaves to the charm possessed by loving women; more foolish than they need be, they caused us only just anxiety enough to increase our joys. Oh! how the breeze bore rapidly away our words and our happy laughter!

When we reached Pouilly I examined, most attentively, the person of my new friend. Certainly I could well believe that he might be seriously loved. Picture to yourseif a young man of middle height, extremely well-proportioned, with a happy face, which was full of expression. His hair was black and his eyes blue; his lips were faintly red; his teeth white and even; a becoming pallor still lingered on his delicate features, and slight brown circles were round his eyes as though he were lately convalescent. Add to all this that his hands were white, well-modelled, and kept like those

of a pretty woman; that he seemed well-educated and was very witty, — and you will have no difficulty in granting that my companion's love would do honor to a countess. More than one young girl might have coveted such a youth for a husband. He was a viscount, and possessed in his own right fifteen thousand francs a year, to say nothing of expectations.

Three miles beyond Pouilly the diligence was overturned. My unfortunate comrade thought best, for his safety, to jump into a fresh-ploughed field rather than to cling tightly to the seat, as I did, and go over with the vehicle. Either he measured his distance ill, or he slipped; I do not know how the accident occurred, but the coach fell over upon him and crushed him. We carried him to the house of a peasant. Amid the groans which his dreadful sufferings forced from him, he was able to bequeath to me a duty to which the last wishes of a dying man gave a sacred character.

While enduring mortal agony, the poor fellow fretted, with the simple candor of his age, for the shock his mistress would feel if she read of his death, unexpectedly, in a newspaper. He begged me to go myself and announce it to her. Then he told me to find a key that was hung around his neck by a ribbon. I found it half imbedded in his flesh. The dying man made not the slightest moan as I drew it, as gently as possible, from the wound it had made. No sooner

had he given me certain necessary instructions to obtain at his home in La Charité-sur-Loire the letters of his lady, which he conjured me to return, than he lost his speech in the middle of a sentence. His last gesture made me understand that the fatal key would be a sign to his mother of my mission. Grieved not to be able to say a word of thanks, — for he never doubted my will to serve him, — he looked at me for a moment with a supplicating eye, and bade me farewell by a motion of his eyelids as he dropped his head and died.

His death was the only fatal result of the overturn; and even that, as the conductor said to me, was partly his own fault.

At La Charité I fulfilled the verbal will of the poor traveller. His mother was absent, which was, I may say, a comfort to me; although I had to bear the grief of an old servant-woman, who tottered when I told her of the death of her young master, and dropped half dead upon a chair on seeing the key still stained with his blood. But, as my thoughts were filled with a greater suffering, — that of the woman from whom fate had snatched the last love of youth, — I left the old housekeeper as soon as I had found the precious correspondence, which was carefully sealed up by my friend of a day.

The château where his countess lived was twenty miles from my own destination, — Moulins; but in

order to reach it I was obliged to do most of the distance across country. It was, therefore, a difficult message for me, in my then condition, to deliver. Through a combination of circumstances unnecessary to explain, I had only enough money to reach Moulins. Nevertheless, with the ardor of youth, I determined to make the trip on foot, and do it rapidly enough to prevent the ill news which travels apace from forestalling me. I inquired the shortest way, and followed the wood-paths of the Bourbonnais, bearing, as it were, a corpse upon my shoulders.

The nearer I came to the château de Montpersan, the more alarmed I felt by the nature of the pilgrimage I had undertaken. My imagination invented a thousand romantic incidents. I fancied the situations in which I might encounter Madame de Montpersan, or, rather, to use the poetic name the young traveller had given her, the Juliet of this romance. I invented admirable answers to the questions which would probably be made to me. At every turn of the wood-path, in the lanes, and between the hedges, I rehearsed the scene of Sosie and his lantern, to which he tells the story of the battle. To the shame of my soul be it said that I thought only, at first, of my own behavior, my intelligence, and the cleverness I intended to display. when I neared the château a reflection crossed my mind like the thunderclap that seems to rend and furrow the lowering gray clouds. What fearful news I was about to give to a woman whose heart was full, at the very moment, of my young friend and the hope, from hour to hour, of seeing him! It was, indeed, a cruel charity to be the messenger of death!

I hastened my steps through the muddy, slimy paths of the Bourbonnais. Presently I came to a great avenue of chestnuts, at the farther end of which the huge pile of the château de Montpersan rose against the sky like a dark brown cloud with light and fantastic edges.

When I reached the gate of the château I found it open. This unexpected circumstance destroyed my plans and my suppositions. Nevertheless, I entered boldly, and was immediately followed by two dogs, barking like true country watch-dogs. At the noise, a stout servant-woman ran out, and when I told her that I wished to speak to Madame la comtesse, she pointed with her hand to the clumps of trees of an English park which surrounded the house, and answered:—

"Madame is over there."

"Thank you!" I replied sarcastically. Over there might send me wandering for two hours through the park.

A pretty little girl with curly hair, a pink sash, white frock and pleated pelerine, here ran up, having

heard my question and the woman's answer. After looking at me for a moment she disappeared, and I heard her calling out, in a thin, childish voice:—

"Mamma! here's a gentleman who wants to see you."

I followed first the voice, and then the fluttering and bounding of the white pelerine which, like a will o' the wisp, showed me the way the child had taken.

I must tell all. At the last clump of bushes in the avenue, I had pulled up my shirt-collar, brushed my old hat and my trousers with the flaps of my coat, the coat with its own sleeves, and the sleeves with each other. Then I had carefully buttoned up the coat in order to show the part beneath the lappels, less shabby than the rest; and, as a final touch, I pulled my trousers well down over my boots, artistically rubbed and cleaned on the grass. Thanks to this Gascon toilet, I hoped not to be taken for a tramp just released from the workhouse; but when I think, to-day, of this episode of my youth, I laugh heartily to myself.

Suddenly, just as I had somewhat composed my demeanor, at the turn of a grassy path, in the midst of flowers aglow in the warmth of the sun, I saw "Juliet" and her husband. The pretty little girl was holding her mother by the hand, and it was easy to see that the countess had hastened her steps on hear-

ing the ambiguous call of her child. Surprised at seeing a stranger (who bowed to her in a sufficiently awkward manner), she stopped and gave me a polite but frigid salutation, which showed me that I had already deceived her hopes. I tried to think, but in vain, of a single one of the many fine phrases so laboriously prepared. During this moment of mutual hesitation the husband came up to us. Myriads of thoughts passed through my brain. By way of introduction I said a few meaningless words, and asked if the two persons before me were really the Comte and Comtesse de Montpersan.

These commonplaces enabled me to judge at a glance, and analyze with a perspicacity rare at my age the two persons whose tranquillity I was about to trouble so violently. The husband seemed to me a type of those country gentlemen who are really the best ornament of the provinces. He wore stout shoes with thick soles. I place those articles first because they struck my eye more vividly than his faded black coat, his much-worn trousers, his limp cravat, and the dog's-eared collar of his shirt. There was something of the magistrate about the man, more of a puisne judge, all the dignity of the mayor of a district, and the sourness of an eligible candidate for the Chamber, periodically rejected since 1816; also a singular mixture of a countryman's good sense with silliness; no

manners, but the pride of wealth; much submission to his wife, though believing himself her master; readiness to make a fuss about little things while paying no attention to important ones: for the rest, a withered face, much wrinkled and tanned; thin gray hair, long and flattened down; and there you have the man!

But the countess! Ah! what a keen and total contrast she presented to him. She was a little woman, with a graceful, slender figure, so dainty and delicate that you might have feared to crush her bones in touching her. She wore a white muslin gown; on her head a charming little cap with pink ribbons, a pink sash, a lace fichu delightfully filled by the beautiful shoulders and rounded outlines of her shape. Her eyes were lively, black, and expressive, her movements gentle, her foot charming. An old man of gallantry would have said she was only thirty, so much of youth remained on her brow and in the various delicate details of her head. As for character, she seemed to me to combine the qualities of the Comtesse de Lignolles and the Marquise de B-, two types of women always fresh in the memory of every young man who has once read Louvet's novel.

I seemed suddenly to penetrate into the secrets of this household, and as suddenly I came to a diplomatic resolution, quite worthy of an old ambassador. It was, perhaps, the only time in my life I ever showed tact, or fully understood in what consists the adroitness of courtiers and men of the world.

Since those days of heedless youth, I have had too many battles upon my hands to distil, as it were, the lesser actions of life and do nothing more than practise the scales of etiquette, — a process which dries the emotions of generous hearts.

"Monsieur le comte, I am anxious to speak to you in private," I said, with a mysterious air, making a few steps backward.

He followed me. Juliet left us alone, — walking carelessly away like a woman certain of knowing her husband's secrets whenever she asked for them. I briefly related to the count the death of my travelling companion. The effect produced upon him showed me plainly that he was greatly attached to the young man, and this discovery emboldened me to answer as follows, in the dialogue which ensued.

"My wife will be in despair," he cried, "and I shall be obliged to take every precaution when informing her of this terrible event."

"Monsieur, in addressing myself to you in the first place," I said, "I fulfilled a duty. I did not wish to deliver a message given to me by an unknown man for Madame la comtesse without informing you of it. But the poor fellow confided to me a species of honorable trust, a secret which I have no right to speak of except as he bade me. From the high opinion which he gave me of your character, I think you will not object to my accomplishing his last wishes. Madame la comtesse will, of course, be at liberty to break the silence which is imposed upon me.

Hearing this praise of himself, the worthy gentleman nodded his head complacently. He answered me with a somewhat involved compliment, and left me free to proceed as I wished. We then returned upon our steps. The first bell rang for dinner at this moment, and he invited me to share the meal.

When Juliet joined us and saw that we were grave and silent, she examined us both furtively. Greatly surprised when her husband made a frivolous excuse to leave us together, she stopped short and flung me one of those glances which none but women have the gift to fling. In that look was all the curiosity of the mistress of a household who receives a stranger falling from the clouds; all the questions which my apparel, youth and physiognomy (in singular contrast) awakened; all the disdain of an adored woman in whose eyes every man save one is nothing; there were, besides, in that one glance, involuntary fears and the annoyance of receiving an unexpected guest at the moment when she was expecting another and a dear one. I felt and comprehended that mute eloquence, and I answered it with a sad smile, full of pity and . compassion. I gazed at her for an instant, as she stood, in the glow of her beauty, in the narrow path bordered with flowers on that serene and sunny day. Seeing this delightful picture I could not check a sigh.

"Alas! madame, I have made a painful journey, undertaken — for you alone."

"Monsieur!" she said.

"I come," I added, "in the name of him who called you 'Juliet.'" She turned pale. "You will not see him to-day."

"Is he ill?" she asked, in a low voice.

"Yes," I answered. "But, I entreat you, be calm. I am charged by him to confide to you certain secret things which concern you; pray believe that no messenger was ever more discreet or more devoted."

"What is the matter?"

"Perhaps he no longer loves you."

"Oh! that is impossible!" she cried, with a smile that was nothing less than frank.

Suddenly a shudder came over her; she cast a wild and rapid glance upon me, and said:—

"Is he living?"

Good God! what a terrible question. I was too young at the time to bear the tone of it; I could not answer, but I looked at her helplessly.

"Monsieur! monsieur! give me an answer," she cried.

"Yes, madame."

"Is it true? Tell me the truth; I can bear it. Tell me. Any suffering is less dreadful than uncertainty."

I answered with tears, drawn from me by the tones which accompanied these words.

She leaned against a tree, giving a feeble cry.

"Madame," I said, "here is your husband."

"Have I a husband?"

With those words she fled away and disappeared.

"Come," said the count, "dinner is getting cold. Come, monsieur."

I followed the master of the house into the diningroom where I found a table served with all the luxury to which Parisian dinners have accustomed us. There were five places set, — two for the master and mistress; one for the little girl; mine, which should have been his; the fifth was that of a canon of Saint-Denis, who, after he had said grace, inquired: —

"Where is our dear countess?"

"Oh! she is coming," replied the count, proceeding to serve the soup, after which he helped himself to an ample plateful which he ate extraordinarily fast.

"Oh! my dear nephew," cried the canon, "if your wife were here you would be more careful."

"Papa will be ill," said the little girl, maliciously.

After this singular gastronomic episode, and while the count was hastily carving a piece of venison a waiting-maid entered the room and said, hurriedly: "Monsieur, we cannot find madame!"

At these words I rose abruptly, fearing some disaster; and my face expressed my fears so plainly that the old canon rose too, and followed me into the garden. The count came, out of decency, as it seemed, to the door, calling after us:—

"Come back! come back! you need not feel uneasy."

But he did not accompany us. The canon, the waiting-maid, and I hurried through paths and lawns, calling, listening, and all the more uneasy because I had told my companions of the death of the young viscount. As we hurried along I related the circumstances of that fatal event, and I saw that the waiting-maid was deeply attached to her mistress; she entered more fully than the canon into the reasons of my terror.

We went from place to place without finding either the countess or any trace of her passage; but at last, passing the side of a wall, I fancied I heard stifled moans issuing from a species of barn. I entered it; and there we discovered Juliet. Led by an instinct of despair, she had buried herself in the hay, covering her head to dull the sound of her terrible cries, — the sobs and tears of childhood, but more piercing, more plaintive. The world had nothing more to offer her.

The maid lifted her mistress, who allowed herself to be handled with the limp indifference of a dying animal. The woman knew nothing else to say than: "Come, madame, come —"

The old canon asked again and again: -

"Are you ill, my niece? What is the matter?"

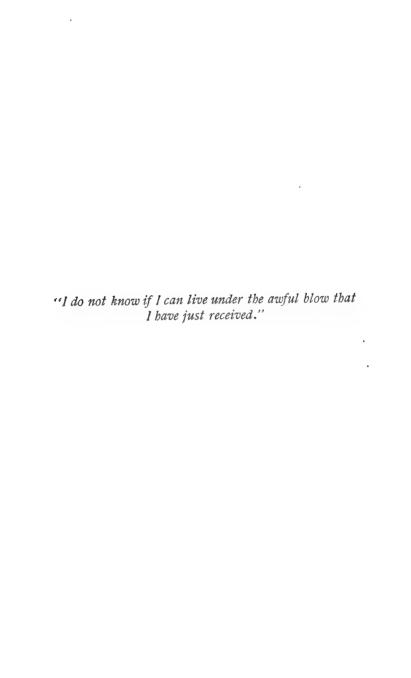
Aided by the maid I carried Juliet to her bedroom, where I laid her on a sofa, bidding the woman watch her, and say to others that her head ached. Then the canon and I went back to the dining-room. It was some time, of course, since we had left the count, and I had not thought of him until we reached the peristyle, when a recollection of his indifference surprised me. But I was much more astonished when, on reaching the dining-room, I found him philosophically seated at the table. He had eaten almost the whole dinner, to the great amusement of the little girl, who smiled to see her father in flagrant disobedience to the countess's commands.

This singular behavior of the count was explained to me by a slight altercation which suddenly arose between the canon and himself. The count, it appeared, was under a strict diet ordered by the doctors to cure him of some serious illness, the name of which escapes me; but, impelled by that ferocious gluttony not uncommon in convalescents, the appetite of the animal within him had got the better of the sensibilities of the man. I thus, almost at the same moment, saw nature in all her truth, — under two entirely different aspects, so different that an element of the comic appeared in the very centre of this terrible grief.

The evening was sad. I was much fatigued. The canon talked of his niece and her tears. The husband digested in silence, having contented himself with the vague explanation which the maid gave him of her mistress's illness. We went to bed early. As I passed the door of the countess's bedroom under guidance of a valet, I stopped, and timidly asked news of her health. Hearing my voice, she made me come in, and tried to speak to me; but finding herself unable to articulate, she only bowed her head, and I retired.

In spite of the cruel emotions which I had shared all day with the sincerity and good faith of a young man, I fell soundly asleep, overcome with the fatigue of my forced march. At a late hour of the night I was awakened by a sharp rattle produced by the rings of my bed-curtains being violently pulled along their iron bar. I then saw the countess at the foot of my bed. Her face was in the full light of a lamp which she had placed upon a table.

"Is it really true, monsieur?" she said. "I do not know if I can live under the awful blow that I have just received; but at this moment I am calm, and I wish to know all."





"Calm!" I thought; "what calmness!"

The frightful pallor of her face contrasting with the brown of her hair, the guttural tones of her voice, and the ravages which a few short hours had made in her changed features stupefied me. She had withered already, like a leaf that is robbed of its last autumnal tints. Her red and swollen eyes, denuded of all their beauty, reflected only a bitter, hopeless grief; gray clouds alone were there, where a few short hours before the sun was sparkling.

I told her simply (not dwelling on certain circumstances too painful for her) the sudden and rapid event which had robbed her of her friend. She did not weep; she listened with avidity, her head bending toward me. Seizing a moment when she seemed to have wholly opened her soul to suffering, and to wish to plunge into her grief with the burning ardor of the first fever of despair, I spoke to her of the fears for her which had troubled the dying man; and I told her how and why it was that he had charged me to bring to her the fatal message. Then her eyes dried from the heat of the lurid fire which now escaped from the deepest regions of her soul. She grew still paler. When I offered her the letters, which I drew from beneath my pillow, she took them mechanically; then she shuddered violently, and said, in a hollow voice: -

"I burned all his! I have nothing of him! nothing!"

She struck her forehead forcibly.

"Madame!" I said; she looked at me with a movement that was almost convulsive. "I cut from his head," I continued, "a lock of his hair, and here it is."

I gave her that one incorruptible fragment of him she had loved and lost. Ah! if you had felt, as I did, the burning tears that fell upon my hands, you would know what gratitude is when it stands beside a benefit! She grasped my hands, and in a stifled voice, and with a look brilliant with fever, a look in which her slender joy shone out amid her sufferings, she said:

"You love! you love! Be happy! may you never lose her who is dear to you—"

She said no more, but fled with her treasure.

The next day this nocturnal scene, mingling with my dreams, seemed to me a fiction. In order to convince myself of its painful truth, I felt beneath my pillow for the letters, and found them gone.

It is unnecessary to relate the events of that day. I was several hours alone with the Juliet my poor companion had so praised to me. The slightest words, the gestures, the actions of that beloved woman proved to me the nobility of soul, the delicacy of feeling which made her one of those dear creatures of love and of devotion so rarely sent upon this earth.

That evening Monsieur de Montpersan drove me

himself to Moulins. When we arrived there, he said, with a sort of embarrassment:—

"Monsieur, if I am not abusing your kindness, and taking a liberty with a stranger to whom we are already under obligations, would you have the kindness to remit in Paris, to Monsieur —— (I forget the name), rue du Sentier, a sum of money which I owe him, and which he has requested me to send him promptly?"

"Willingly," I said.

In the innocence of my heart I took the roll of twenty-five louis which the count handed to me. It enabled me to pay my way back to Paris; and the next morning I carried the sum thus lent to me to the correspondent and so-called creditor of Montpersan.

It was not till I had actually taken the money to the person indicated that I comprehended the delicate cleverness with which Juliet had befriended me. The manner in which that gold was lent, the silence preserved about my poverty, so unmistakable to the eye, did they not reveal the *genius* of a loving woman?

How delightful to tell this simple story to a woman who presses closer to you in terror, whispering: "Ah! dear, don't die and leave me!"

